

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION AND WEAK INSTITUTIONS:
THE CASE OF URBAN EXPANSION IN ISTANBUL



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Civil Society Participation and Weak Institutions:

The Case of Urban Expansion in Istanbul

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Civil Society Participation and Weak Institutions:

The Case of Urban Expansion in Istanbul

Istanbul has experienced a multifaceted transformation between 2009 and 2019 with the introduction of various urban megaprojects. During this period, the urban expansion through the northern parts of the city has accelerated with the introduction of three megaprojects, i.e., the 3rd Bridge and the North Marmara Highway projects, the 3rd Airport project, and the Canal Istanbul project. This led to tensions between the state and the civil society over the top-down decision-making processes, the possible environmental costs of the projects, and the fate of the Northern Forests in Istanbul. Analyzing the period between 2009 and 2019, this thesis seeks answer to the question how the participatory prospects of environmental civil society organizations (CSOs) in the environmental governance of Istanbul has changed and what are implications of this change on the rise of the informal environmental movement organizations (EMOs) in the city. This thesis utilizes the data conducted from semi-structured interviews with the members of CSOs and extended document research. Based on this data, this thesis concluded that the civil society actors have experienced unprecedented difficulties in trying to reach the decision-making processes in the case of this three megaprojects because of the increasing weaknesses of formal participatory institutions. The institutional gridlocks they encountered have changed their capacities and strategies as well as encouraged the pursuit of political participation through more contentious forms of mobilization.

ÖZET

Sivil Toplum Katılımı ve Zayıf Kurumlar:

İstanbul'da Kentsel Genişleme Örneği

İstanbul, 2009-2019 yılları arasında çeşitli kentsel dönüşüm projeleri ve mega projelerle çok yönlü bir dönüşüm yaşamıştır. Bu dönemde, kentin kuzey kısımlara doğru gerçekleşen kentsel genişleme, 3. Köprü ve Kuzey Marmara Otoyolu projeleri, 3. Havaalanı projesi ve Kanal İstanbul projelerinin tanıtılması ile hız kazanmıştır. Bu gelişmeler devlet ve sivil toplum arasında tepeden aşağı karar verme süreçleri, projelerin olası çevresel maliyetleri ve İstanbul'daki Kuzey Ormanlarının kaderi ekseninde bir gerginliğe yol açtı. 2009-2019 yılları arasındaki dönemi inceleyen bu tez, çevreci sivil toplum kuruluşlarının İstanbul'un çevre yönetimine katılım beklentilerinin nasıl değiştiği ve bu değişimin gayri resmi çevre hareketlerinin yükselişine etkileri nelerdir sorularına cevap aramaktadır. Bu tezde, çevreci sivil toplum kuruluşları ve sosyal hareketlerin üyeleriyle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden ve geniş bir belge araştırmasından elde edilen veriler kullanılmaktadır. Bu verilere dayanılarak, bu tezde sivil toplum aktörlerinin, bu süreçlere sivil toplum katılımını sağlamakla görevli resmî kurumların artan zayıflıkları nedeniyle, bahsi geçen mega projelerin karar verme süreçlerine ulaşmaya çalışırken benzeri görülmemiş zorluklar yaşadıkları sonucuna varılmıştır. Karşılaştıkları kurumsal kilitlenmeler, kapasitelerini ve stratejilerini değiştirmiş ve sivil toplum aktörlerini daha çekişmeli örgütlenme biçimleriyle siyasi katılım aramaya teşvik etmiştir.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party (<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i>)
CHP	Republican People's Party (<i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i>)
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment (<i>Çevresel Etki Değerlendirmesi</i>)
DİDDK	Council of State Administrative Law Office (<i>Danıştay İdari Dava Daireleri Kurulu</i>)
EMOs	Environmental Movement Organizations
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDP	Peoples' Democratic Party (<i>Halkların Demokratik Partisi</i>)
HEPP	Hydroelectric Power Plant
İBB	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (<i>İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi</i>)
İKS	Istanbul City Defense (<i>İstanbul Kent Savunması</i>)
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
TEMA	The Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats (<i>Türkiye Erozyonla Mücadele, Ağaçlandırma ve Doğal Varlıkları Koruma Vakfı</i>)
TMMOB	Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (<i>Türk Mühendisler ve Mimar Odaları Birliği</i>)
TOKİ	Housing Development Administration (<i>Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı</i>)
TÜİK	Turkish Statistical Institute (<i>Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu</i>)
WWF	World Wildlife Fund (<i>Doğal Hayatı Koruma Vakfı</i>)
KOS	Northern Forests Defense (<i>Kuzey Ormanları Savunması</i>)
PPP	Public Private Partnership

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A city is a product of the social, economic, and political arrangements and any specific composition of these factors determine how the environment is governed in the city and the roles of different actors in environmental governance. Any changes in these arrangements can dramatically change the environmental governance practices in the city and the participatory prospects of the civil society actors into the environmental decision-making processes. Such a change has experienced in Istanbul, Turkey, when the city has undergone a radical transformation and unbridled urban expansion between 2009 and 2019 at the cost of its urban fabric and environment. The urban expansion towards the northern parts of the city has been actively encouraged by the Justice and Development Party [Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi] (AKP) government through the successive announcements of three megaprojects located in the last remaining forestry areas of Istanbul, i.e., the Northern Forests. While the AKP government seeks legitimization for these megaprojects through the endorsement of neoliberal developmental discourse, the environmental civil society has become the potential venue for the generation of and the promotion of counter-hegemonic environmentalist discourse. Consequently, civil society actors have experienced unprecedented difficulties in trying to reach the decision-making processes of the top-down megaprojects.

In line with these developments, this thesis is an attempt to disclose the changing sociopolitical roles of civil society in the urban environmental governance of Istanbul amid this radical transformation. Hence, the main research question is how the participatory prospects of environmental civil society organizations (CSOs)

in the environmental governance of Istanbul has changed between 2009 and 2019 and what are implications of this change on the rise of the informal environmental movement organizations (EMOs) in the city. In trying to answer this research question, I have mainly focused on the decision-making and implementation processes of three megaprojects, namely the Third Bridge and North Marmara Highway projects, Third Airport project, and Canal Istanbul project. These projects are located at the Northern Forests of Istanbul, which are generally evaluated to be of vital importance for the city's sustainability, ecosystem, and biodiversity (TEMA, 2014; WWF, 2018). Thus, these megaprojects have been criticized by the vast majority of the civil society actors on the grounds that they accelerate urban expansion towards the Northern Forests and may potentially cause irrevocable environmental degradation in the area.

The 1/100.000 scaled Master Plan of Istanbul, which is introduced in 2009 by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IBB), has also repetitively underlined the crucial role of this forestry area for the city and labeled this area as “areas under protection” (IBB, 2009a). The main aim of this 2009 Master Plan was to provide a framework for the planned and sustainable development of Istanbul and, in this way, avert the uncontrolled urban expansion and environmental degradation in the city. The plan highlights the fact that “the current demographic and economic structures and spatial development propensities in Istanbul shows that the city is in the process of irreversibly damaging and effacing its life support systems”¹ (IBB, 2019a, p. 510). One of the main reasons for this environmental degradation is stated to be urban

¹ Translated from: “İstanbul’da gerek demografik ve ekonomik yapı gerek mevcut mekansal gelişme eğilimleri gerekse alana yönelik projeksiyonlar; İl’in yakın gelecekte kendi yaşam destek sistemlerini geri dönüşü olmayacak şekilde bozarak yok etme sürecinde olduğunu göstermektedir.”

expansion, which “leads to the predomination of economic interests over the ecological values in the North Marmara region²” (p. 495). Though, this plan has suffered from serious implementation problems as the above-mentioned megaprojects are introduced one by one only after several months of the Master Plan’s approval by IBB.

Regardless of the substantial legal basis provided by the Master Plan for the protection of the Northern Forests, the civil society actors’ attempts to prevent environmental destruction in the area has proved to be mostly ineffective. In this thesis, I problematize this ineffectiveness and try to explain it with reference to the civil society actors’ embeddedness into the state structures that are characterized by crucial institutional weaknesses. I argue that the growing weaknesses of formal participatory institutions increase uncertainties for civil society actors over the prospects of participation and, thus, increases the costs of participation through formal channels. In Chapter 5, I elucidate this argument by examining the strategies of participation and resistance employed by the CSOs one by one. Then, in Chapter 6, I diagnose that the increasing weaknesses of formal participation mechanisms and the resulting growing constraints on the formal participation have created an urge for the emergence of alternative models of organization that are out of the official gaze of the state, that is; the informal EMOs.

To be able to test these hypotheses, this study utilizes 15 semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with the members of environmental CSOs and EMOs operating in Istanbul as well as personnel of IBB. Building on the data conducted

² Translated from: “İstanbul’un batıda Çorlu-Çerkezköy-Tekirdağ, doğuda İzmit ve güneyde Yalova’ya kadar yayılması sonucu; Marmara Denizi’nin kuzey sahilleri boyunca oluşan yatay eksen ve onun İstanbul Boğazı kıyıları boyunca kuzeye uzantıları, Kuzey Marmara coğrafyasında ekonomik çıkarların ekolojik değerlere baskın çıkmasına yol açmıştır.”

from the interviews, field observations, and extended document research, this thesis challenges the secondary role attached to the state in the neoliberal environmental governance literature by dwelling on the state's pivotal role in determining the boundaries and conditions of civil society participation. As oppose to the existing literature that portrays civil society participation as a given outcome of the neoliberalization of environmental governance processes, I argue that this overstated focus on decentralization and participation in the existing literature overlooks the fact that the environmental question may be a source of contention between the state and civil society. Moreover, although the literature on civil society is voluminous, the existing literature remains meager in explaining the novel difficulties the CSOs operating in non-democratic countries experiences when their discourse strictly contradicts with the hegemonic discourse endorsed by the government. Furthermore, this thesis is also an attempt to rethink the outcomes of the increasing constraints on the formal participation mechanisms in non-democratic countries. Hence, by aligning the nascent literature on the weak institutions with the literature on civil society, I elucidate the dynamic relationship between formal and informal forms of social mobilization and political participation and explore the implications of such arguments for the role of CSOs in non-democratic contexts.

1.1 Theoretical framework

Today, achieving sustainable and participatory environmental governance is one of the most challenging issues of world politics. The negative effects of neoliberal developmental interests on the maintenance of the environmental quality around the world place considerable pressures on the governments as well as on the non-governmental actors. Either in the form of an international, domestic, or local

character, this pressure has created an urge for the governments and non-governmental actors to take steps against environmental degradation. The contradiction of pressures for environmental protection and urban development has led to a change in the patterns of environmental governance and the patterns of interaction between the actors involved in the environmental question, especially in the urban areas.

The environmental governance literature generally focuses on the global trend of neoliberalization and its effects on the changing nature of environmental governance throughout the world. Great emphasis has been put on the rescaling of the state through globalization and decentralization, which diminishes the dominant role of the state in governance mechanisms (Finger, Tamiotti, & Allouche, 2006; Jessop, 1996; Tickell & Peck, 1995). The decentralized patterns of environmental governance are generally welcomed by the existing literature considering the higher prospects of democratization and participation of civil society into the decision-making and governance mechanisms (Haughton, 2002). Within this framework, the transnational corporations, international organizations, and environmental civil society organizations are evaluated to fill the gap left by the state in the environmental governance and become the new and voluntary suppliers of environmental protection (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bütte, 2010; Gallagher & Weinthal, 2012; van der Heijden, 2012). Though, portraying the neoliberal environmental governance as being a perfect model and explanatory tool for governance mechanisms in diverse domestic contexts leads to an inadequate understanding of the non-participatory environmental governance practices in non-democratic countries. The neoliberal framing of environmental governance with an extended focus on

decentralization and participation overlooks the weaknesses of formal participation mechanisms in non-democratic countries.

To be able to compensate for this inadequacy in the literature, I peruse the literature on civil society with a focus on their strategies of participation and resistance in the non-democratic countries. This nascent literature has emerged as a response to the overemphasis put on the CSOs' role as the trigger and accelerator of political liberalization in non-democratic countries and questions the assumption that the CSOs are independent entities outside the state (Albrecht & Schlumberger, 2004; Doyle, 2017; Wiktorowicz, 2000). The CSOs' dependence on state structures and power relations leads many to conclude that they can be a source of legitimacy to the authoritarian state policies and could extend state power instead of democratic participation (Seckinelgin, 2006). Furthermore, Wiktorowicz (2000) argues that the CSOs are new means of state's social control, drawing attention to the fact that they "keep the collective action visible to the administrative apparatus" (p. 43). In studying these patterns of interaction between the CSOs and the state, I have mainly used the framework provided by Young (2002) that emphasizes the dual character of the CSOs, which substantiates two different strategies and paths of interaction between the CSOs and state in non-democratic countries. These characteristics are "self-organization" and "contribution to the public sphere" (Young, 2002). He argues that the authoritarian states promote CSOs that overemphasizes their self-organization and service delivery faction while limiting their contribution to the public sphere via the production of counter-hegemonic discourses.

In addition to the formal CSOs, the informal EMOs have become important actors of civil society in Istanbul during the last decade. In trying to understand why and how the EMOs have mushroomed in Istanbul in this specific period, I greatly

benefited from the theoretical framework provided by Boulding (2014) and Levitsky and Murillo (2013). Boulding (2014) argues that the level of political institutionalization in a country significantly affects the type of political participation that the actors in civil society will encourage. Hence, she finds out that the CSOs may intentionally or unintentionally encourage more contentious forms of political participation when the political system does not function effectively to facilitate participation through formal channels. At this point, Levitsky and Murillo's (2013) conceptualization of weak institutions has helped me to conceptualize weak institutions and encouraged me to examine their effects on the actors' strategic choices.

1.2 Method

This thesis is a product of a qualitative case study which is built upon semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. For this thesis, I conducted 15 semi-structured in-depth interviews with the environmental CSOs operating in Istanbul, the members of the informal EMOs, and the personnel in IBB from October 2018 to September 2019. I also benefited from the methodology of participant observation. I participated meetings and events organized by CSO and EMOs in Istanbul between October 2018 to September 2019. Thus, I have greatly benefited from some informal interviews and observational data. Also, I conducted a document research for which I analyzed related laws, plans, and agreements. Laws, plans, and agreements that I examined in Chapter 4 provided me with a historical overview of the environmental governance and CSO-state relations in Turkey and equipped me with the necessary knowledge to evaluate the path-dependency and transformation.

Prior to my semi-structured interviews, I did a pilot study concerning the political ecology of Istanbul, for which I conducted four unstructured interviews in May 2018. The unstructured interviews are conducted with environmental activists in Turkey and the academics studying environmental governance and contentious politics. These interviews equipped me with the basic understanding of the contentious dynamics of urban environmental governance in Istanbul and motivated me to focus on the case of the three biggest megaprojects located in the Northern Forests of Istanbul. Hence, covering the theoretical discussions about the neoliberalization the environmental governance afterward, I decided to locate these discussions on the context of the urban environmental governance of the Northern Forests of Istanbul.

In the literature on civil society in undemocratic states, there is generally an emphasis on the duality of the CSOs' experiences. Hence, the overview of the state-CSO relations in Turkey reveals the same patterns as many scholars argued that the "selective inclusion" and "divided environment" are historically used by the Turkish state to control civil society while also benefiting from the image of participation and inclusion (Doyle, 2017; Lust-Okar, 2004). Based on this theoretical framework and the state-CSO relations in Turkey, I divided my sample into three groups. The first two groups consist of two groups of CSOs historically seen as more moderate or more radical by the state and by the existing literature. Though, before introducing these CSOs it is important to emphasize that such a categorization is employed to re-question the existence of a "divided environment" in Turkey. Hence, this thesis shows that such rigid categorizations are void in today's Turkey considering that both the CSOs that are seen as "moderate" and those that are historically labeled as "radical" have experienced great difficulties in trying to achieve effective

participation in the case of megaprojects. So, in the case of three megaprojects in Istanbul, it becomes apparent that the borders between included/ excluded or moderate/radical are very fluid and the civil society participation occurs on the state's terms regardless of the historical and organizational characteristics of CSOs, as well as their strategic and discursive choices.

To see this fluidity and, in the end, the dissolution of the divided environment, I have investigated the changing experiences of the CSOs in two groups. The first group of CSOs consists of the members of the so-called "conservationist environmental CSOs," which have more full-time workers, more volunteers, more funds, and long-lasting relatively good relations with the state (Unalan, 2016). This group of CSOs consist of those CSOs that historically have more moderate in their relations with the state and more depoliticized in their discourse to be able to sustain their ability to participate and operate in a "divided environment" (Lust-Okar, 2004). The second group consists of the members of environmental CSOs that could be labeled as "radical environmentalists" as they are potentially seen as a threat by the state regarding their will to challenge the status-quo (Unalan, 2016). This group of CSOs are adversely affected by the "divided environment" and expected to experience greater difficulties in trying to achieve effective participation. Lastly, the third group consists of the members of informal EMOs, which are highly critical both to the state and the CSOs and, therefore, choose to remain out of the official gaze of the state. The list of interviews is given in Appendix A based on their belonging to one of these groups and the date and duration of interviews.

The data collected from the interviews with the people from informal EMOs reveals the discontent about the limitations on the effective formal participation and

increasingly exclusionary informal procedures. I argue that, during this decade of megaprojects, the environmental CSOs in Turkey do not usually fit to these existing categories and characterizations and that their positioning visa vis the state is quite fluid and dynamic. Within this decade, the environmental CSOs, regardless of their issue areas, discourse, funders, historical relations with the state, and chosen strategies of participation, experiences increased uncertainties and difficulties in trying to achieve effective participation to the decision-making processes of the megaprojects.

The interviews were semi-structured, which means that there was a framework that was decided to follow before the interviews are conducted. Though, this framework has also given the interviewees a certain level of leverage over the issues to be discussed during the interview as the interviewee is free to give details on certain issues that they are well-informed, have more dissent or opinions. I was able to gather more data out of the interviews as the semi-structured framework enables me to ask for details when needed while also keeping me in the track of the major things to be discussed. The interviews are conducted face-to-face and one-by-one except for one interview, which is conducted as an online video call on the request of the interviewee. The duration of the interviews was between 25 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes, while most of them lasted approximately about 40 minutes. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees. Though, the name of the interviewees and the organizations they work and/or volunteers are not revealed to protect their personal information and to shield them from any possible damage. Thus, all of the interviewees are given interviewee numbers and are only mentioned with those numbers in this thesis.

During my interviews, the interviewee's reservation to openly criticize the government was a real obstacle for me. After conducting the first five interviews based on convenience sampling, I have realized the need to continue with the snowball sampling considering its potential facilitating effect on building trust among me and the interviewees (Browne, 2005; Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). For such a sampling, I got help from one of my friends who is currently an active volunteer in an EMO. My friend has become an entry point for me and introduced me to his/her acquaintances. Snowball sampling helped me to build a kind of mutual trust with the interviewees since I have visited them with the reference and help of the common acquaintances (Sadler et al., 2010). Although my first five interviews were also useful, the interviews conducted with snowball sampling provided me with more details on the contentious dynamics of urban environmental governance of Istanbul and the active role of the state in determining the modes of participation. Furthermore, snowball sampling has helped me to reach the members of informal EMOs since they had no official headquarter or secretariat. Even though these environmental movement organizations were very welcoming and active in social media, interviewing with a member was hard without the reference of a common acquaintance because of their highly horizontal organizational structure.

I have used three different questionnaires for the semi-structured interviews conducted with the groups mentioned above. These three questionnaires can be found in Appendix B. For the first group, the questions mainly focus on the CSOs' relationship with the state and the formal participation mechanisms in environmental governance. Since this group is, by far, the most successful group in achieving limited participation in the policymaking processes, I have tried to reveal, through my questions, how they can achieve this and to what extent their participation

remains limited and conditional. Besides, I have asked the interviewees about their relationship with the radical environmentalist CSOs and their perception towards the EMOs. The vast majority of the questions aimed to reveal how these CSOs' constant interaction with state institutions have shaped their strategies and capacities for participation during the decision-making and implementation processes of the megaprojects.

For the second group, I have mainly asked questions about the limits on their participation in the decision-making processes with a focus on their relations with the state. The questions further concentrate on their strategies of participation and resistance and their perception of the environmental question as a political or depoliticized issue. Moreover, I also asked the interviewees in the second group about their relations with the other environmental CSOs and the informal EMOs. Lastly, to the third group of interviewees, I have mainly directed the questions on the reasons for them choosing an alternative organization and resistance model, which is aimed to reveal the relationship between political opportunity structures and the strategic choices of social movements. The questions, further, dwell on their organizational strategies that aimed to make them less vulnerable to the weaknesses of the CSOs. Furthermore, I have asked questions regarding their strategies of participation and resistance, as well as their opinions on the (de)politicized nature of the environmental question.

I have conducted fifteen interviews with the members of environmental civil society organizations operating in Istanbul, the members of the environmental movement organizations, and the personnel of IBB. Three interviews have been collected with the interviewees in the first group, i.e. the so-called conservationist CSOs. Two interviewees are members of World Wildlife Fund Turkey (WWF-

Turkey), which is a domestic branch of an international environmental CSO. This CSOs has historically better relations with the state and largely depends on international funding. As explained in detail in Chapter 5, they published reports, filed lawsuits, organized petition campaigns to participate in the decision-making processes of the megaprojects. Moreover, one interview has been done with a high-level executive of the TEMA foundation, which is one of the first environmental civil society organizations established in Turkey and known for its relative success in establishing and sustaining relationships with the state and the municipalities, as well as with the business. This organization is generally funded by individuals and national business groups. Like WWF-Turkey, they published reports, filed lawsuits, organized petition campaigns to participate in the decision-making processes of the megaprojects. These two CSOs have been generally referred as “conservationist” or “moderates” in the literature that investigates CSO-state relations in Turkey. Though, in this thesis, I argued that, just like the so-called radical environmentalist CSOs, these CSOs have also experienced great difficulties and uncertainties in trying to achieve participation in the case of megaprojects. Hence, this shows us that the boundaries of civil society are very fluid in Turkey and categories such as included or excluded and moderate or radical fails to portrait this fluidity.

Four interviews were conducted with the interviewees in the second group. One interview was conducted with one of the founders of Yeşil Düşünce Derneği (Green Thought Association), which is a civil society organization organically connected with the Greens and, therefore; has intrinsic political aspirations and connections. Another interview was done with a member of the environmental CSO called 350, a local branch of an international organization with the same name. This organization has recently got official recognition and official status of association

and funded fully by their international center. Two interviews were conducted with the members of different chambers of Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects [Türk Mühendisler ve Mimar Odaları Birliği] (TMMOB) Istanbul, which is an official corporate professional association established by law in 1954. These organizations have also objected the megaprojects through reports, lawsuits, petitions and also employed authorized public activism as a strategy of participation. Like TEMA and WWF-Turkey they have suffered from institutional weaknesses in their attempts to achieve effective participation. In Chapter 5, I have investigated the strategies of participation of these two groups of CSOs separately to investigate whether any group of CSOs can achieve some level of effective participation thanks to some of their intrinsic characteristics and, in the end, found that all CSOs suffers from similar institutional weaknesses and the resulting uncertainties.

Seven interviews were conducted with the members of the EMOs. Four interviews have been conducted with the people from Northern Forests Defense [Kuzey Ormanları Savunması] (KOS) whose initial aim is to protect the green area in the northern part of the Istanbul, a site of the recent megaprojects of the AKP government. Two interviews were conducted with the members of Extinction Rebellion Turkey [Yokoluş İsyanı], which is a domestic product of a global environmental social movement. One interview was done with a member and one of the founders of Istanbul City Defense [İstanbul Kent Savunması] (İKS), which was founded after the Gezi protests and, since then, is an informal social movement focusing on the urban and environmental problems of Istanbul. One additional interview was conducted with personnel of IBB in order to get a grasp of the de-jure principles of environmental governance in Istanbul, de-facto experiences, and the discrepancy between them.

1.3 Organization of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. In Chapter 2, I dwell on the literature that provides me with a theoretical framework to study the questions that I have asked. This chapter is divided into three subtitles composing of three different literature. Firstly, I introduce the general discussion over the neoliberal environmental governance and problematize its extended focus on decentralization and participation. I focus mainly on the arguments of Castree (2008a) and Ciple and Roberts (2017) and Duit et al. (2016) and draw attention to the increasing glorification of civil society as being the brand-new dominant actor in the environmental governance at the international, domestic and the local levels. These studies provide me with a framework to locate these discussions in the context of the neoliberal environmental governance of the Northern Forests of Istanbul. Then, I present a theoretical framework of civil society provided by Young (2002) that conceptualizes the dual characteristics of CSOs in non-democratic countries. This framework of CSOs enables a better understanding of the limits of CSOs in non-democratic countries and, thus, encourages an investigation of the ensuing modes and strategies of participation employed by the civil society actors. Lastly, I touch upon to the literature on weak institutions and social movements to dwell on the relationship between the increasing constraints on formal participation and more contentious types of political participation with reference to the works of Boulding (2014), Levitsky and Murillo (2013), Machado, Scartascini and Tommaso (2011) and Moseley (2018).

In Chapter 3, I investigate the patterns of neoliberal urbanization in Istanbul, which led to a radical transformation of the city within a decade with a focus on three

largest megaprojects, i.e., the Third Airport, the Third Bridge and North Marmara Highway and Canal Istanbul. This chapter delineates the *de facto* governance mechanisms in the urban and environmental governance of Istanbul by providing insight into the contentious dynamics of urban transformation and urban expansion in Istanbul. After explaining the general discussions on the neoliberal urbanization and transformation of Istanbul, the three largest megaprojects that expanded the city borders towards the Northern Forests in the city and violated the initial 1/100.000 scaled 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul is investigated with a particular emphasis on the prospects of participation of the civil society actors.

In Chapter 4, I provide a historical background about the *de jure* urban and environmental governance mechanisms in Turkey. Analyzing the changes in the environmental laws, regulations, and plans of Turkey and the laws and regulations on civil society, this chapter attempts to reveal that there are a great path-dependency and several critical junctures in the history of environmental governance in Istanbul. One of these critical junctures is the 1/100.000 scaled 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul, which is a significant milestone for the state's awareness of urban environmental problems and civil society participation. This chapter reveals that the CSO-state relations in Turkey are considerably path-dependent as the state continually tries to control the civil society and even using it as disciplinary tool since the process of neoliberalization began in the 1950s. There have been several ups and downs in the liberalization of civil society as a result of some external pressure and internal developments. Though, the CSOs in Turkey remained under the constant legal and administrative control of the state and the bureaucracy. Moreover, the environmental laws and regulations reveal that the responsibility of environmental protection

remains diffused and uncontrolled, even if lots of environmental laws and regulations have been enacted.

In Chapter 5, I present the data that I have gathered during the semi-structured in-depth interviews and document research on the participation mechanisms and strategies of formal environmental CSOs. This chapter investigates separately the strategies of participation and resistance employed by, firstly, so-called conservationist CSOs, and, secondly, the so-called radical environmentalist CSOs. When discussing the experiences of conservationist CSOs in their attempts to participate in the decision-making processes of these three megaprojects, I examine their strategies of report-writing and lobbying. This research reveals that the conservationist CSOs also employ some strategies that do not directly target the protection of the environment but, instead, aim to maintain good relations with the state, which is believed to serve indirectly to the, again, environmental interests. When analyzing this pattern, I elucidate how a high level of depoliticization is consciously endorsed and upheld by conservationist CSOs to be able to fulfill their self-organization function by avoiding any conflict with the state. As noted earlier, this conflict avoidance strategy tells us a lot about state's control and instrumentalization strategies as well. In effect, this urge to cooperate with the state enables the state to depoliticize what essentially is a critically political environmental choices embedded in these urban expansion plans.

Secondly, I examined the strategies of participation employed by so-called radical environmentalist CSOs as perceived and defined by the state and found that their attempts to participate through legal mechanisms or authorized public activism are handicapped by increased uncertainty and growing costs. Concerning the legal participation mechanism, I thoroughly analyzed that the procrastination of trial

processes and implementation problems of the legal decisions significantly diminished the CSOs' ability to participate effectively in the decision-making processes of these projects. Public activism strategy is also hard to employ effectively since the bureaucratic burden associated with it is considerably increased in the last decade. It is essential to realize that all of these investigated strategies are attempts of CSOs for achieving some level of post-facto participation while the opportunities for a priori participation is restricted with pseudo-meetings and one-way information sharing. Lastly, another crucial finding of this chapter is that, within the last decade and in the case of the three megaprojects in question, we see that the "divided environment" has gradually wiped out to the detriment of any form of active civil society participation. Public activism is essentially seen as a process of dangerous politicization of an issue that the state would like to keep apolitical, hence depicting these CSOs as "radical."

In Chapter 6, I present the qualitative data that I have gathered during the semi-structured in-depth interviews and document research. By explaining the daily experiences and struggles of the environmental CSOs operating in Istanbul, Chapter 5 reveals the strategies of dissident groups environmental CSOs in their attempts to participate in the decision-making and governance processes and their strategies of resistance to top-down megaprojects in Istanbul. In Chapter 6, I question the emergence and rise of the social movements during the era between 2009 and 2019, especially after 2013 Gezi protests within the theoretical framework provided in Chapter 2. I have primarily elucidated the effect of dissent raising from the increasing constraints on participation through formal mechanisms and tried to understand the main motivations behind the EMO's choices over-functioning as informal and horizontal organizations. Then, I investigated whether the usage of

more political discourse by the EMOs compared to the CSOs enables them to expand the public sphere for the discussion and promotion of counter-hegemonic discourses.

Lastly, in Chapter 7, I provide a summary of the thesis and state my concluding remarks about the findings of this study. I give an overview of the contribution of this thesis to the neoliberal environmental governance, civil society, weak institutions, and social movements literature. Then, I evaluate the pros and cons of this study and provide several questions for further studies.



CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I engage with the literature on neoliberal environmental governance, civil society in non-democratic countries, weak institutions, and social movements. In the first section of this chapter, I examine the general principles of neoliberal environmental governance and focus on the role attributed to civil society as being the new and voluntary suppliers of environmental protection. Drawing attention to the secondary role attached to the state in the literature, I present the arguments that neoliberal environmental policies could lead to contentious dynamics between the state and civil society. Thus, it is crucial to analyze the processes of neoliberalization by paying attention to the domestic context of a country with a particular focus on the modes and prospects of civil society participation.

Then, by drawing on Young's (2002) approach to CSOs' dualistic characteristics, I present the nascent literature on the CSO-state relations in non-democratic countries. This literature enables me to examine the unique difficulties that CSOs may experience when trying to participate in the decision-making processes in non-democratic countries. The perspective provided by Young (2002) and Lewis (2013) highlights the inability of CSOs to promote counter-hegemonic discourse through public sphere activism. In order to further develop this argument, I benefit from Lust-Okar's (2004) and Doyle's (2017) arguments on the "divided environment" as well as theoretical discussions over depoliticization of civil society of Kenis and Lievens (2014), Paker, Adaman, Kadirbeyoğlu, and Özkaynak (2013) and Kadirbeyoğlu, Adaman, Özkaynak, and Paker (2017).

Lastly, I pore over the literature on the weak institutions and social movements in order to answer the question of how formal institutional constraints that CSOs experience when trying to participate in the decision-making of the megaprojects could encourage informal mobilization affords. Within this discussion, I present the arguments of Boulding (2014), who, again, draws attention to the importance of the domestic context and political institutions in shaping the forms of political participation affords of the civil society. Hence, she argues that the CSOs in countries with poorly functioning political systems could, intentionally and unintentionally, encourage more contentious and informal forms of participation. Then, I present a working definition of the social movements that differentiate them from CSOs on the bases of their informality. Providing an overview of the discussions on the possible motivations for choosing contentious forms of political participation, I conclude that the institutional deadlocks caused by weak participatory institutions considerably increase the costs of participation through formal institutions/mechanisms.

2.1 Literature on neoliberal environmental governance

To be able to get a good grasp of the environmental governance literature, it is crucial to start with differentiating the term “governance” from “government.” The choice for using the term “governance” comes from the will to emphasize the diffusion of the political authority among multiple stakeholders who consistently participate in and effects the outcomes of the decision-making process (Norman, Cook, & Cohen, 2015). Governance pays peculiar attention to the procedures of decision-making and, therefore, questions the nature of the interaction between the multiple actors involved in the decision-making process (Beall, 2005; Harriss,

Stokke, & Törnquist, 2005). After making this differentiation, one has to dwell on what makes a governance model “neoliberal.” Brenner and Theodera (2002) define neoliberalism by referring to its key characteristics, such as the increased importance of the urban spaces as the center of global economy and competitiveness, rescaling and multi-scaling of the states, prevalence of new forms of governance, and extensive marketization and privatization. By virtue of these characteristics, neoliberalism constantly (re)draws the borders of the state, the civil society and the market based on a market-based logic and, therefore; is widely considered as an economic, political, social, and global project (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010).

Though, scholars of environmental governance draw attention to the fact that neoliberalism is also an environmental project considering that it implies certain modes of production and, therefore; promotes specific terms of access and use of the natural resources (Bakker, 2015; Heynen, Kalka, & Swyngedouw, 2006; Mansfield, 2008). Castree explains the environmental dimension of the neoliberalism by saying that “it (neoliberalism) offers one particular means of determining who should pay for maintaining or altering certain states of nature; and it does so by seeking to naturalize the market as a means for accessing and distributing life's necessities and luxuries” (Castree, 2008a, p. 143).

Though, even if neoliberalism is an environmental project since the very beginning, environmental governance was not always neoliberal. The neoliberal turn in the environmental governance can be defined with the antagonistic stance towards the state’s role and capacity in the enhancement of the environmental problems, an emphasis on the growing importance of international organizations, multinational corporations and the environmental CSOs of international and local characters, and the glorification of the market-based solutions to the environmental problems with a

high level of voluntary participation to the decision-making process and the governance (Castree, 2008b; Ciplet & Roberts, 2017; J. McCarthy & Prudham, 2004; Pellizzoni, 2011). The growing body of literature on neoliberal environmental governance focuses on the utilization of privatization, commodification, deregulation, reregulation, and marketization as the new mechanisms of nature's governance (Bakker, 2005; Castree, 2008a).

This conceptualization of environmental governance emphasizes the environment's secondary role to the market and its instrumentalization. Ciplet and Roberts (2017) focus on this problematic aspect and diagnose that "the expansion of the market, economic rationality and private gain (...) increasingly identified as the primary goals and sole mechanisms for the protection of public and environmental goods." (Ciplet & Roberts, 2017, p. 150). So, in neoliberal environmental governance, the environment turns into being a means for the achievement of higher ends serving the interests of the market actors, which is expected to ensure the protection of the environment through the market mechanisms. By virtue of these characteristics, neoliberal environmental governance is argued to (re)draw the borders of the state, the civil society and the market based on a market-based logic and, thus, substantially changes the patterns of interaction between these actors and creates a unique governance model with more decentralized procedures of decision-making (Harriss et al., 2005).

The literature mainly focuses on the phenomenon of decentralization as the main characteristics of the neoliberalization of environmental governance. The environmental governance scholars are generally highly optimistic about the prospects of participation and inclusion by basing their arguments on the "hollowing out of the state" assumption and concluding that this creates new opportunities for

participation to the decision-making process for the civil society organizations (Finger et al., 2006). This assumption emphasizes the reallocation of the responsibilities between the state, civil society organizations and the business and posits that the primary role of the state that employs a neoliberal agenda is providing the market actors with a suitable condition for their operation via regulation (Jessop, 1996; Tickell & Peck, 1995). This assumption also exists in the early literature on civil society as delineated below. Though, both scholars of neoliberal environmental governance and civil society overlook the cases where the processes of neoliberalization are accompanied by authoritarian state practices, which effectively alters how *de jure* decentralization is (or is not) transformed into *de facto* increasing prospects of civil society participation.

The growing involvement of the civil society organizations, transnational corporations, and international organizations into the environmental governance has strengthened the argument that the state has left its role as the main “provider of key services” and, instead, has become a “strategic enabler” in environmental governance (Haughton, 2002, p. 792). The state is given the role of encouraging civil society organizations both “to provide services that interventionist states did, or could potentially provide for citizens” and “to offer compensatory mechanisms that can tackle any (environmental) problems” (Castree, 2008a, p. 142). Indeed, the civil society actors have responded the demand of the state to claim a secondary role in the welfare provision and environmental protection by increasingly participating into the “policymaking processes, providing services, engaging in activism, and seeking to raise awareness” (Edwards, 2009; Finger et al., 2006; Friedman, Hochstetler, & Clark, 2005; Paker et al., 2013, p. 760).

Decentralization, to some extent, serves the state to keep the environmental question out of the political contestation and discussion by reallocating the responsibility of environmental protection among the state, civil society, and the business. Though, greater involvement of the civil society organizations and increasing marketization and privatization did not mean that the neoliberal environmental policies and projects have remained free from contestation. The existing literature presents two potential sources of contestation to the state that follows neoliberal environmental policies. Firstly, since the environmental policies and programs are mostly built on top of the pre-existing social, political and economic arrangements it has created considerable tensions with state imperatives such as neoliberal development and security and, therefore; created intra-state conflict within the bureaucracy (Duit, Feindt, & Meadowcroft, 2016; Weidner & Jänicke, 2002).

Secondly, the neoliberal environmental question led to an ongoing tension between the state and the civil society organizations (Adaman, Akbulut, & Arsel, 2017; Altan-Olcay & İçduygu, 2012; Paker et al., 2013). Trying to fill the gap left by the state in environmental protection and welfare provision, the civil society organizations have been the dissident voices of the neoliberal environmental governance model by continually pushing the state for greater involvement for environmental protection and the business for a more responsible mode of production. This thesis engages with this second type of tension that neoliberal environmental governance creates in the local context of Istanbul. Understanding the dynamics of this tension is essential to reveal the mutation of civil society under the constraints of non-democratic state structures.

2.2 Literature on civil society in non-democratic countries

The broad definition of civil society has been employed in this research since both the CSOs and social movements are active agents of organized public resistance and service provision that has to be analyzed in the case of urban environmental governance of Istanbul. Defined as “a public sphere between the state, the market, and households, where people associate to advance common interests by organizing resistance to authority and/or provide alternative and complementary services to those provided by the market and the state,” civil society is an indispensable part of the decision-making processes in the neoliberal era (Edwards, 2009; Ehrenberg, 2012; Paker et al., 2013, p. 761). Though, previously seen as the “world’s new superpowers,” recently, the capacity and the room of maneuver of the civil society organizations have become highly questionable with the advancement of the authoritarian and repressive regimes throughout the world (Diamond, Plattner, & Walker, 2016). CIVICUS (2019), investigating the state of civil society in 195 countries, in its 2019 report, concludes that the civil society is currently in a crisis throughout the world. The report refers to the instances of civil society members’ and human rights activists’ increasing encounter with marginalization, official charges, conviction, and heavy reprisals.

As the process of neoliberalization continues, the socio-economic capabilities of the state have become highly questionable, and the civil society has become an actor that can replace the state in certain functions, such as service and welfare provision and environmental protection (Edwards, 2009; Joachim & Locher, 2009; Paker et al., 2013; Tamiotti & Finger, 2001). In Chapter 4, the neoliberalization of the urban and environmental governance in Turkey are explained in detail. These processes are, according to the literature on neoliberal environmental governance and

civil society, expected to increase the role of the environmental CSOs in environmental governance. Though, in Turkey, decentralization has always remained limited as it is accompanied by the measures of recentralization that continuously control and limit the participation mechanisms. Thus, instead of cooperatively replacing the role of the state in environmental governance as a result of the processes of neoliberalization, the environmental CSOs experienced unique struggles in participating the decision-making processes of the environmental governance of Istanbul, which is explained in detail in Chapter 3 and the analysis.

In addition to the role given to CSOs for offsetting the withdrawal of the state with privatization and structural adjustments, for long, the scholars of civil society saw the CSOs as potential vehicles for political liberalization and accelerators of democratization processes (Bebbington & Farrington, 1993; Eaton, 2003; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1994; Westergaard, 1998). These scholars have tried to explain the non-democratic regimes, generally those in the Middle East region, through their nonexistent or undeveloped civil society (Cavatorta & Durac, 2010). The investigation of the emancipatory and democratizing role of the CSOs, as well, requires assuming that the CSOs potentially open up new participatory platforms for the underrepresented groups or interests.

Only recently, the role attached to the CSOs as a new participatory platform and the attributed cooperative character of the CSO-state relations have become questionable as it becomes apparent that the non-democratic regimes have a considerable impact on the roles and capacities of CSOs. Importantly, this acknowledgment harmed the civil society's overemphasized character of being outside the state as an independent entity (Walzer, 1991). Realizing this, several studies have been conducted to reveal how CSOs are dependent on state structures

and institutions. This dependence on the state structure has shaped the capabilities and strategies of the CSOs and ended up creating a contrast with the roles attributed to the CSOs and their *de facto* socio-political role (Altan-Olcay & İçduygu, 2012; Doyle, 2017).

The latest research conducted on authoritarian regimes has revealed the civil society's potential not for democratizing but, surprisingly, for providing legitimacy to the authoritarian state policies and projects and furthering state power at the expense of greater democratic participation (Albrecht, 2005; Doyle, 2017; Wiktorowicz, 2000). This critique of the conventional wisdom about the roles of CSOs and cooperative CSO-state relations is located in the context of the urban environmental governance of Istanbul in Chapter 5 with reference to the legitimacy-provision role of the CSO's participation into formal participation mechanism to the megaprojects in question. A careful analysis of the civil society development in Turkey, as well, substantiates this argument and reveals the path-dependency. Toprak (1996) summarizes the CSO-state relations in the early republican era of Turkey by arguing that the civil society organizations were used by the state as an ideological instrument to support the modernization process. She diagnoses that the early republican state of Turkey has glorified the civil society organizations to be a signifier of modernization, but, at the same time, allowed the existence of only state-sponsored associations that fulfill a specific criterion (Toprak, 1996).

Dwelling on the state of civil society in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Wiktorowicz (2000) argues that the authoritarian states in the region have prompted the flourishing of the civil society organizations to be able to refrain from public unrest and uncontrolled collective action that can challenge the

status quo. Wiktorowicz (2000) portrays the CSOs as the new means of social control by the state in the following words:

Once created, these organizations were embedded in a web of bureaucratic practices and legal codes that allows those in power to monitor and regulate collective activities. This web reduces the possibility of a challenge to the state from civil society by rendering much of collective action visible to the administrative apparatus. Under such circumstances, civil society institutions are more an instrument of state social control than a mechanism of collective empowerment. (p. 43)

This new form of social control, Wiktorowicz (2000) claims, denotes a shift from the use of force as a disciplinary power to the more indirect means such as the administrative and regulatory tools of control. The control is ensured by the state through the requirement of visibility from the CSOs (Foucault, 1979; Wiktorowicz, 2000). Indeed, in line with this argument, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 demonstrate that the bureaucratic practices are effectively used by the state as control mechanisms to absorb the CSOs' activities in the public sphere through the requirement of depoliticization and moderation.

Taking these critiques into account, Young (2002) provides one with a framework to analyze the CSOs in non-democratic countries. Young (2002) focuses on the dual characteristics of CSOs in non-democratic countries, which are "self-organization" and "contribution to the public sphere." She draws attention to the paradoxical impact of this duality on the relations of the CSOs with the authoritarian states (Lewis, 2013; Young, 2002). "Self-organization" denotes the structural characteristics of the CSOs, which serves to give a chance to organize for the elite or disadvantaged and marginalized groups in the society "who would otherwise have limited access to representation and resources" (Lewis, 2013, p. 331). This self-organization of the excluded provides a legitimization to the non-democratic states with an image of participation and inclusion, which explains the paradoxical co-

existence of the authoritarian rise and the survival of the civil society (Burch, 2000). The state, trying to retain a hegemonic discourse, tries to legitimize itself through the construction of alternative public spaces that can “influence and shape the vast assemblage of oral and written texts, rituals, visual culture, and performance that constitute public discourse” (Lewis, 2013, p. 333).

On the other hand, according to Young (2002), CSOs become the target of the non-democratic states when they expand to the “public sphere” instead of just operating as an elite organization or an organization for the disadvantaged and marginalized. Considering that the “public sphere is non-existent or highly constrained” in the authoritarian contexts, any attempt to create a public sphere for the discussion and promotion of the discourses other than the one promoted by the state is highly likely to be repressed by the state (Lewis, 2013, p. 331). According to this framework, the authoritarian states see the CSOs involved in the public sphere as “promoters of counter-discourses” and “potential initiators of mobilization” (Lewis, 2013, p. 333).

Trying to “promote nongovernmental associations engaged in some measure of self-organization and service delivery, while restricting those engaged in public sphere discursive activities,” the authoritarian states adopt administrative and legislative rules that aim to limit the discursive activities of the CSOs in the public sphere and, in this way, they limit what can be politicized (Lewis, 2013, p. 332; Swyngedouw, 2014). Drawing on the framework of Young, Lewis (2013) concludes that “under such repressive constraints, civil society is unable to achieve a combination of organizational self-governance with discursive openness—the ability to develop and express alternative views, discourses, idioms, and imaginaries” (p. 333). According to Lewis (2013), the impact of the CSOs depends on the

achievement of this combination since, only then, the CSOs can successfully challenge the legitimacy of the hegemonic discourse in public sphere.

Similarly, the literature investigating the effectiveness of CSOs pays attention to the degree of their politicization, which is what Young (2002) refers to as “public sphere discursive activity.” The state, through administrative and regulative oversight, encourages depoliticization since the depoliticization ensures the CSOs to stay out of the public sphere (Young, 2002). In line with this argument, the environmental civil society has been evaluated to be “depoliticized,” and this “depoliticization occurs when the exercise of hegemonic power and the antagonisms that result from it are covered up” (Kenis & Lievens, 2014, p. 535). This covering up shows itself when the environmental civil society actors, intentionally or unintentionally, refrain from asking the questions that may challenge the prevailing political and economic power structures. Without challenging the power structures and posing alternatives to the existing political and economic systems, the environmental civil society actors argue for the technical adjustments which are criticized, by many, for ignoring the core of all environmental problems (Kenis & Lievens, 2014; Swyngedouw, 2010).

The studies on civil society participation in Turkey confirms the validity of the arguments on the dual characteristics of CSOs. Recent studies argue that the Turkish state controls the civil society through the creation of a “divided environment” with selective participation and constant repression based on the structural and discursive characteristics of CSOs (Doyle, 2017; Kadirbeyoğlu et al., 2017; Lust-Okar, 2004). The establishment of such a “divided environment” diminishes the will of those included, namely moderates, to mobilize and radically challenge the status quo, and increases the cost of mobilization for the excluded and,

paradoxically, serves to maintain the existing regime (Wiktorowicz, 2000; Albrecht; 2005). Kadirbeyoğlu et al. (2017) argue that, in Turkey, politicization leads to the emergence of a conflict-driven relationship between the politicized environmental CSOs and the state and, thus, the choice of the degree of politicization depends mainly on the intended “mode of interaction with the state.” Drawing attention to the CSOs’ need to cooperate with the state in order to be able to operate effectively, Doyle argues that the interaction with the state “moderating effect” on CSOs (p. 253). Kadirbeyoğlu et al. (2017) diagnose a similar moderating effect of state cooperation and the need for state permission in the case of environmental CSOs in Turkey. So, according to Doyle, the Turkish state is very successful in “de-radicalizing the message that these organizations bring to society, thus severely restricting them from contributing to progressive social change” and, also, in depicting the other groups as radical (p. 253).

In line with this argument, Paker et al. (2013) observe that although the number of CSOs and their funding increase and they seem to have been participating into the policymaking more, this does not mean that the environmental protection and conservation is better off. To explain the reason behind the failure to translate the increased participation into an observable impact, they argue that:

The state subscribes to a participatory and inclusive discourse in its affairs with civil society actors, in practice, it adopts an arbitrary/inconsistent stand towards them. CSOs have found that the state is accessible and easy to cooperate with on some cases, provided they do not contradict the modernist priorities of the state, but is particularly territorial with regard to issues such as water regimes, nuclear energy, mining, and international waters, rendering CSOs ‘ineffective’. (Paker et al., 2013, p. 766)

Calling this ‘participation on paper,’ they observe that the “inclusion seems to occur on the state’s terms,” which contradicts with the CSO’s counter-hegemonic role in the public sphere (Paker et al., 2013, p. 767).

Though, Paker et al. (2013) also draw attention to the fact that there are still “strategies to resist and preserve critical positions” for the CSOs even if they face challenges like “intimidation, co-optation, and selective inclusion” (p. 768). The CSOs co-opting the state may often take a critical discursive stand towards the state on specific issues. So, they conclude, the relations between the state and the CSOs “cannot be reduced to any single dimension of cooperation, co-optation, or conflict, but must be analyzed as a complex set of contingent dynamics that play out simultaneously” (2013, p. 768). This multi-dimensional and complex relationship is also of crucial importance in the case of the decision-making and implementation processes of three megaprojects located in the Northern Forests of Istanbul. Both state’s attitude towards civil society participation and, reciprocally, the CSOs’ attitude towards the employment of counter-hegemonic discursive activities have changed considerably between 2009 and 2019. This multi-dimensional and uneven relationship is investigated extensively in Chapter 5.

2.3 How formal institutional constraints induce informal mobilization

Growing concerns about the urban environmental problems in Istanbul and the questions over the effectiveness of the increasingly institutionalized environmentalism led to the emergence of novel forms of environmental movement organizations that is, in this study, called EMOs (Rootes, 2016). As described above, a comprehensive conceptualization of civil society is employed in this thesis, which enabled us to evaluate the informal EMOs as part of the civil society. These organizations have embraced nonviolent direct action to protest against local urban and environmental problems and have led to in the past few years.

The discussions over the limitations on the counter-hegemonic sociopolitical role of the CSOs in non-democratic countries urge one to discuss the mobilization efforts not in the form of formal CSOs, but in a more deinstitutionalized, horizontal and movement-based forms. Altan-Olcay and İçduygu (2012), observing the limitations on the civil society with regard to its dependence on the state structures, assert that “successful mobilization for more social inclusion, more rights and demands from the state have come not necessarily from legally organized civil society” and mention new ways of resistance and mobilization that could be seen “illegal” and “undesirable” by the state authorities (p. 162). The reason for their undesirability is the fact that they remain out of the formal gaze of the state and harm the state control over the civil society and, therefore, over the public sphere and hegemonic discourse (Altan-Olcay & İçduygu, 2012).

Likewise, Paker et al. (2013) refer to the potential emergence of such “alternative channels” as CSOs face constant struggles to achieve participation (p. 766). Once de-institutionalized, EMOs can create new avenues of contestation and resistance to the state by diminishing the civil society actors’ dependence on state structures. Wiktorowicz (2000) portrays the threat posed by the alternative mobilization models to the state in the following words:

The most serious challenge to a system of control based upon predictability and visibility is group work that does not conform to the logic of the system and instead remains outside state surveillance. The state attempts to limit the possibility of collective action in the niches of society by requiring that all group work is performed in the open through civil society organizations that are within reach of administrative practice. Both administrative and repressive techniques are used to channel collective activities into a social space controlled by the state and susceptible to the disciplinary technologies of the bureaucracy. Activism outside this state-delineated space, which is potentially disruptive and uncontrollable, is limited and repressed. Formally organized activities in civil society are thus actively encouraged over informal collective action. (p. 49)

Though, considering that the formal civil society organizations experience unique difficulties in trying to achieve effective participation in non-democratic countries, it becomes questionable to what extent the state can successfully encourage formally organized activities. Can we think of an alternative scenario where the state unintentionally encourages informal collective action over formal civil society activism?

Hence, in line with this question, Boulding (2014) diagnoses that “the larger political context in which CSOs are operating can greatly influence the type of participation they encourage” (p. 456). She finds out a significant relationship between the probability of public sphere activism and the increasing connection with the CSOs in less stable democracies of the developing world. This means that people’s increasing contact with CSOs could equip the CSOs with the means to encourage particular channels of participation. In line with this argument, some studies signaled the CSOs’ role as a controlling channel for social discontent and activism in non-democratic contexts (Jad, 2007; Petras, 1997; Wiktorowicz, 2000). Jad (2007) argues that the proliferation of CSOs in the Middle East has hurt the emancipatory social movement’s legitimacy by establishing a new discourse that can be embodied and manipulated by the politicians, discrediting the resistance strategies of social movements. This argument is crucial since it draws attention to the possible effect of the highly depoliticized discourse and activities of the CSOs on the social movements. This issue is discussed in depth in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, where I show that the emphasis on scientificness and political-neutrality enables the state to actively determine the terms of participation and exclusion from the decision-making processes. So, the new depoliticized discourse of CSOs does not only hurt the legitimacy of the social movements but also increases the cost of counter-hegemonic

discursive activities for CSOs themselves. A different discussion over the relationship between the CSOs and social movements emphasizes that the social movements and CSOs complement each other and share a common identity even if they differ in their repertoires of tactics (Rootes, 2016). This argument is also discussed in Chapter 6 when we examine whether the CSOs aims to respond to similar problems with the use of different tactics.

Boulding (2014), though, points to the context-driven nature of the relationship between the formal and informal mobilization affords. She argues that, in countries where the political system does not function effectively to facilitate participation through formal channels, the CSOs could encourage more contentious modes of participation. CSOs' role in fostering more contentious forms of political participation could be either an intentional outcome of the realization of the inefficiency of formal mechanisms of participation or an unintentional outcome of the increased associative activity (Boulding, 2014). Intentionally, the CSOs can provide information, funding, and physical space for people with similar dissents to gather around. This is more or less in line with the arguments of scholars of mobilizing structures who believes that the social movements are the result of the mobilizing efforts of the institutionalized actors (McCarthy & Zald, 2017). They argue that the institutionalized actors define, manipulate, and even create discontent to generate public resistance. Though, in addition to this, Boulding (2014) argues that the CSOs could encourage more contentious forms of participation unintentionally by increasing the associative activity. This point is of crucial importance for this thesis since, as I extensively discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, the EMOs in Istanbul generally composed of people who are experienced in civil society activism.

The social movements are generally defined with reference to their being “outside (of) the established parameters of the political system” (Melucci, 1989, p. 56). According to Tilly (1984), this “outsider status” derives from the fact that the social movements claim to represent underrepresented constituencies (Burstein, Einwohner, & Hollander, 1995, p. 136). On the other hand, McAdam (1982) argues that the reason for the social movements to be distinguished as being outside of the established political system is their use of “noninstitutional forms of political participation” (p. 25). These noninstitutionalized strategies differ from the institutionalized ones based on their informality and intended disruptiveness (Burstein et al., 1995). In this thesis, I have endorsed McAdam’s definition of social movements and distinguish them from the institutionalized actors in civil society, i.e., CSOs, with regard to their informality, their extensive use of counter-hegemonic public sphere activities and their endorsement of a new political discourse. These points are discussed extensively in Chapter 6.

A strand of social movements literature, known as the political process model, emphasizes the role of the domestic political opportunities and constraints in determining the structure, scope and effectiveness of social movements (Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi, 1989; McAdam, 1982; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; Tarrow, 1983; Tilly, 2018). This perspective is in line with the arguments of Boulding (2014), considering that they both emphasize the importance of domestic state structures and political institutions in shaping the modes and strategies of challengers of the status quo. According to this perspective, social movements are the results of specific social and political changes and the resulting discontent within the society that creates political opportunities for challenging the pre-existing order (Tilly, 1984). Providing a systematic analysis of different components of political opportunity

structures, Kriesi (1995) draws attention to the role of formal state institutions, along with informal institutions and configuration of power, in determining the political opportunities for challengers. He argues that any changes in these characteristics make the pre-existing status-quo “more receptive or vulnerable to challenge by insurgent groups” and, therefore, leads to the emergence of new social movements (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 10).

This study is crucial to show that the formal institutional structures of a country considerably affect the modes of social mobilization. According to Kriesi (1995), formal state institutions shape the strategic choices of challengers considerably by determining “the degree of formal access to the state” (Kriesi, 1995, p. 85). Indeed, in Chapter 5, I have drawn attention to this point on the basis that when the degree of formal access to the decision-making processes diminishes considerably with the weakening of the formal participatory institutions, the incentives for formal participation decreased among the civil society. In line with this thesis’ emphasis on weak institutions, Kriesi (1995) argues that the access to the state is higher for the challengers of the status-quo or the hegemonic discourse when the degree of decentralization and the institutionalization of democratic procedures are higher (Kriesi, 1995).

If the formal institutions are weak, they could have a distinct form of effect in shaping the strategic choices of challengers. Levitsky and Murillo (2013) define weak institutions based on their two key characteristics. Firstly, they argue that the enforcement in weak institutions is either low or under the “*de facto* discretion” of the ruler (Levitsky & Murillo, 2013). The *de facto* discretion is the result of the ambiguities in the formal law and mechanisms that enable the ruler to manipulate the implementation processes at will effectively. Secondly, the weak institutions are

defined to be not durable and could change abruptly following any change in the distribution of power (Levitsky & Murillo, 2013). The outcome of such an institutional arrangement is “high uncertainty” and “short time horizons,” which diminish the incentive of the people to obey the formally stated rules and the emergence and spread of informal institutions (Levitsky & Murillo, 2013). In a weak formal institutional environment, informal institutions serve to increase the certainty and create longer time horizons for the actors trying to function effectively. Furthermore, Levitsky and Murillo (2005) argue that the “weak institutions are more open to rapid and far-reaching change” since the challengers would have a broader set of strategies available to them (p. 282). Thus, weak formal institutions encourage “political actors to pursue goals through informal channels” (Levitsky & Murillo, 2005, p. 282).

These arguments are supported, recently, by several authors who investigate the effects of political institutions on the contentious modes of political participation (Machado, Scartascini, & Tommasi, 2011; Moseley, 2018). The work of Machado et al. (2011) reveals that the strong institutions foster more institutionalized forms of political participation while, in the contexts of weak institutional arrangements, “protests and other unconventional means of participation become more appealing” (p. 340). This is, also, in line with the arguments of Boulding (2014) who argues that while the CSOs further political participation through formal institutions and mechanism in countries with strong institutions they promote more contentious forms of political participation in weak institutional environments.

All in all, the theoretical discussions presented in this chapter have provided a comprehensive framework for analyzing the transformation that civil society has experienced within the last decade in Turkey. In Chapter 5, I have investigated how

de facto sociopolitical roles of the environmental CSOs have dramatically changed as they become potential venues for the generation of counter-hegemonic discourses that may harm the hard-won legitimacy of the megaprojects by using the framework provided by Young (2002) and Lewis (2013). Also, I elucidate the institutional gridlocks that CSOs experience as a result of the increasing weaknesses of formal institutions of participation to show the CSOs' embeddedness into the state structures by using this theoretical framework. Then, in Chapter 6, I scrutinize the effect of these institutional gridlocks in determining the types of social mobilization to be employed by the challengers of the hegemonic developmentalist discourse with reference to the works of Boulding (2014), Machado et al. (2011), and Levitsky and Murillo (2013). As this thesis investigates the urban environmental governance of Istanbul, it is now crucial to present the discussions over the neoliberal urbanization and urban expansion in Istanbul.

CHAPTER 3

ISTANBUL: THE CITY OF NEOLIBERAL URBANIZATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

In this chapter, I delineate the process of neoliberal urbanization and the ensuing contentious dynamics in Istanbul to be able to comprehend the contention over the Northern Forests. Istanbul is the largest city of Turkey concerning population size and its share on the gross domestic product (GDP). According to the data provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), the population of Istanbul in 2018 is more than 15 million, which makes it the most populated city in the country and the region. From 2009 to 2019, the city has undergone a multifaceted process of transformation with the announcement of numerous megaprojects. This transformation has altered the pre-existing social, economic, and political arrangements and created a distinct form of tension between the state and the civil society. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the radical urban expansion that Istanbul has gone through within a decade. In this chapter, I dwell on the neoliberal transformation of Istanbul with a focus on the discussions over the fate of forestry areas and the resulting shift in the civil society-state relations.

In recent years, neoliberalism has become a general term to define the processes of urbanization throughout the world (Castree, 2006; Larner, 2003; Perreault & Martin, 2005). Turkey has been following a neoliberal economic agenda since the early 1980s. This prolonged neoliberalization process has taken a distinct shape in the past decade with the advancement of administrative centralization and deregulation of urban planning processes and development controls.



Fig. 1 Aerial viewpoint of Istanbul in December 2009
Source: [Google Earth, 2020]



Fig. 2 Aerial viewpoint of Istanbul in February 2020
Source: [Google Earth, 2020]

The neoliberal policies and their effects on Istanbul and its inhabitants have been a great discussion of academics from diverse disciplines. The AKP government has been generally criticized for following an aggressive and non-participatory path of globalization and neoliberal urban development (Altan-Olcay, 2014; Dinçer, 2011; Elicin, 2014; Erol, Ozbay, Turem, & Terzioglu, 2016; Keyder, 2005; Öktem, 2006; Öz & Eder, 2018). Öz and Eder (2018) diagnose that this aggressive model of urban development realized with “the rapid commodification of land, real estate speculation, and booming construction industry” is the fundamental pillar of the political economy of the AKP government since it provides the party with the necessary economic and political power base and, also, with the image of developmentalism (p. 4). Although there is a path-dependency in the AKP government’s model of urban development, an investigation of major events and projects reveals that the governance strategies and preferences have changed over time, which has furthered the aggressiveness of the urban policies.

It is possible to track this change by looking at the (non)participatory nature of urban and environmental policymaking starting from the approval of the 1/100.000 scaled 2009 Master Plan to the decision-making and implementation processes of the mega projects. The 1/100.000 scaled 2009 Master Plan was prepared by academics and experts, brought together in an organization called Istanbul Metropolitan Planning (IMP), and had a cautious attitude towards urban expansion in Istanbul (Kuyucu, 2017). Master Plan of Istanbul has been accepted with the approval of the mayor of IBB. The plan is the most comprehensive and large-scale plan of the city and, therefore, has precedence over all the other small-scaled Master plans. This means that all the attempts of planning within the city borders should conform with the rules of the 1/100.000 scaled 2009 Master Plan.

The plan aimed to determine the principles of land use that should be followed in the years ahead. The most basic principle of the plan was that “Istanbul should develop multcentrally along the Marmara Sea and through East-West axis in line with the principles of sustainability, and the expansion towards the North should be controlled”³ (IBB, 2009, p. 3). Though, Figure 1 and Figure 2 show, the city continued to expand towards the north after the approval of the 2009 Master Plan. In the plan, the forestry areas under threat by the megaprojects are labeled as “the areas where the urban development needs to be limited,” considering the vital role of the Northern Forests in the ecological sustainability of the city (IBB, 2009a). As could be seen in Figure 3, the plan puts the Northern Forests of Istanbul under the category of “Protected Areas for Urban Sustainability” (IBB, 2009a). Even the small rural residential areas in the northern parts of the city are labeled as “areas that will be kept under control regarding their development and density.”

After the approval of this plan by IBB, from 2009 to 2019, the city has transformed in two ways. First, the built environment in the city has been reformulated by the state through the urban transformation projects. The social, political, and economic consequences of these projects in Istanbul draw significant attention from scholars with diverse scholarly interests (Akçali & Korkut, 2015; Keyder, 2005; Lovering & Türkmen, 2011; Tugal, 2009; Ünsal & Kuyucu, 2010). Lovering and Turkmen argue that while neoliberalization of urban policies share common characteristics throughout the world, “the institutional and ideological

³ Translated from: “İstanbul’un Doğu-Batı aksında ve Marmara Denizi boyunca doğrusal bir yapıda ve çevresel sürdürülebilirlik ilkeleri doğrultusunda çok merkezli (sıçrayarak) geliştirilmesi ve kuzeye doğru gelişimin kontrol altına alınması”.

framework through which neo-liberalization is accompanied by authoritarianism is uniquely Turkish” (Lovering & Türkmen, 2011, p. 82).

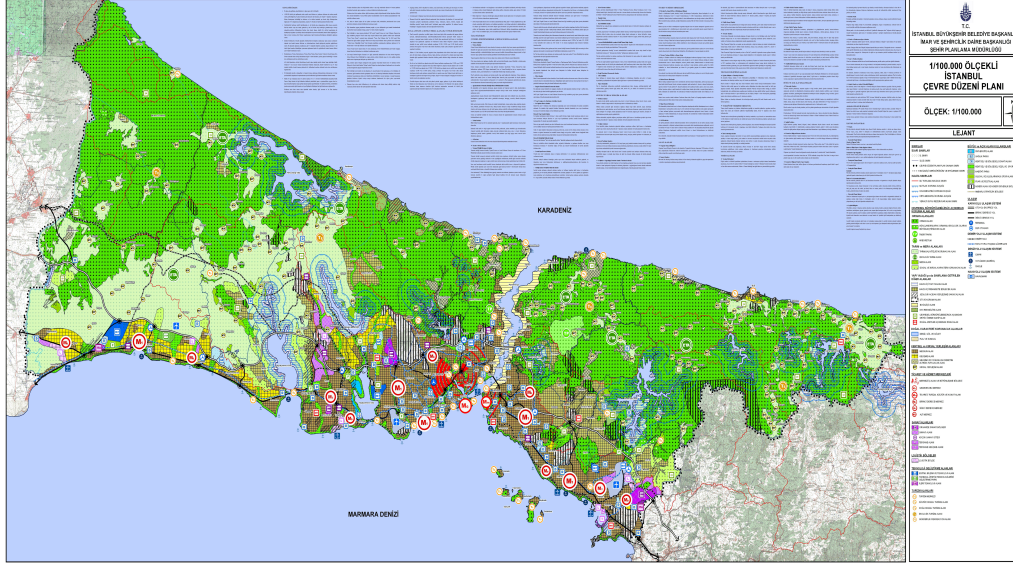


Fig. 3 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul
Source: IBB İstanbul Çevre Raporu, 2015

Elicin (2014) draws attention to the distinct role of urban politics in Turkey, as it served as a crucial intervention area for the authorities. She argues that, during the period of neoliberalization under the rule of the AKP, this specific role of urban politics has become more significant with the increasing authoritarianism in urban policies and the resulting radical disruptions in the processes of democratic decision-making (Elicin, 2014). This unique form of neoliberal urbanization is characterized by the recentralization of urban policymaking processes and the use of extraordinary measures of policymaking, land expropriation, commodification, and privatization. Figure 4 shows the urban transformation sites and megaprojects done between 2009 and 2019 and portrays the rapid transformation the city experienced within a decade.



Fig. 4 Megaprojects in Istanbul between 2009 and 2020

Source: [Mega İstanbul, 2020] <http://megaprojeleristanbul.com/>

The history of urban transformation in Istanbul shows that this unique blend of neoliberal urban policies and authoritarianism in Turkey generates new forms of public resistance that could be observed in the contentious local dynamics in urban transformation sites like Ayazma, Tarlabası, Sulkule regions and, also, the nation-wide Gezi events. Even though I do not investigate these urban transformation projects in my thesis and focus only on the case of the three megaprojects with potentially devastating consequences for the environment, they are also important to show the problems in civil society participation in urban environmental governance of Istanbul beyond this case.

Although the protests remained mostly local in other cases, Gezi events signaled the eruption of widespread popular discontent towards the city-wide restructuring and the resulting destruction of the green spaces in the city (Özen, 2015). The Gezi events are particularly important for this thesis because it, also,

reveals the interlink between the urban and environmental dissent and signals the greater integration of urban environmental question into the daily politics in the following years. On the attempt of the bulldozers to demolish the Gezi Park in the center of Istanbul to be replaced by a shopping mall, several environmentalist activists have tried to prevent the operation (Akçali & Korkut, 2015). Though, Akçali and Korkut (2015) argue that what has generated the Gezi protests was not directly the IBB's top-down decision of Gezi Park's destruction, but, instead, was the brutal police force with the use of excessive tear gas and plastic bullets targeting the peaceful demonstrators in the park. So, the unique blend of neoliberal urban policies and authoritarianism has generated an unprecedented response, i.e., the Gezi protests.

The nation-wide protests consisted of "night-long marches and the occupation of squares in the different neighborhoods of Istanbul and cities all around Turkey" (Akçali & Korkut, 2015, p. 86). After the protesters faced asymmetrical police force, the protests have taken a new form, and more individualistic protests like "standing man and woman" have been organized ("Herkes Duran Adamı", 2013). Furthermore, park forums have been conducted throughout the country, which reveals the people's will to be informed about and participate in the decision-making processes ("Gezi Parkı Forumları," 2013). In the long run, people have gathered around various EMOs that stresses the urban and ecological crisis of the city.

The second kind of transformation that the city experiences is the rapid and uncontrolled urban expansion. Especially after 2009, the forestry areas of Istanbul have become potential sites for urban expansion and, therefore, the sources of tension between the state and the CSOs. Validebag Grove's resistance started in 2012 when the project to build a mosque in the area made public (Alkaya, 2015). In 2014, another project that aims to build a parking lot in the grove had been

announced. In 2018, as well, the Validebag Grove had been announced to be transformed into a “nations’ park” with fitness centers and walking-tracks (Güvemli, 2018). All projects have faced with local resistance of an informal EMO called after the grove. In 2014, the Moda Grove, legally a “Disaster Gathering Area,” has been made eligible for parking lot license by IBB (Kural, 2014). The local people have pitched their tents and keep watch of the area until it is announced that the parking lot license is annulled. Similarly, in 2013, there were debates over the fate of the Belgrade Forests in Istanbul after its legal status has been changed from “Protection Forest” to “Natural Park” (Uras, 2012). Similar tensions have emerged over the protection of Fatih Forest, Fındıklı Park, Maçka Park, Aşiyan Park, and many other green areas located at the center of Istanbul.

In addition to these, several large-scale projects have expanded the city northward and aimed to create new satellite cities, increase the global competitiveness of the city, generate resources by attracting foreign and domestic investors, and promote economic development via the leap of the construction sector. The Third Bridge and the North Marmara Highway Project, the Third Airport Project, and the Canal Istanbul Project are forecasted as intertwined projects, and all are located at the last remaining forestry areas in the northern part of Istanbul. These projects are the product of Public Private Partnership (PPP), which is a distinct form of privatization and marketization. In PPPs, the public entities formally remain as the property of the state, though the right of usage is held by the private actors (T.C. Kalkınma Bakanlığı, 2015). The state ensures the private investors a certain level of profit in return of their investment to these large-scale projects, which furthers the public deficit if and when the project does not bring the envisaged profit. Hence, the 10th Development Plan (2014-2018) of Turkey mentions the protracted financial

burden of PPP projects on the public and states that there is an urgent need for the correct governance of PPP processes (Ministry of Development Turkey, 2014).

According to the time-series data on PPP investments provided by the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, the PPP projects reached a peak in 2013 when 35 PPP projects with a contract value of 72 billion dollars are introduced (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı, 2019). Among the rest, the biggest projects with regard to the contract value are the Third Bridge and the North Marmara Highway Project, the Third Airport Project, and the Canal Istanbul Project. The project reports of these mega projects reveal that these are not only single infrastructure projects but are the main drivers of a radical transformation of Istanbul and irreversible environmental degradation with the construction of new satellite cities in the northern Istanbul. The analysis of the role of CSOs in such huge projects allows us to explore the precise nature of state CSO relations, that is why I am particularly focusing on these megaprojects.

3.1 The third bridge and the north marmara highway projects

The Third Bridge and the North Marmara Highway Projects have started to be discussed at the end of the 1990s. Though, the active opposition of the environmental CSOs, together with the problems in financing, has suspended the plan until 2010. In April 2010, only after several months of the approval of the Master Plan by IBB, the then Minister of Transport Binali Yıldırım and the then mayor of IBB Kadir Topbaş have announced the plan to build a Third Bridge in the Northern parts of Istanbul ("3. köprüünün güzergahı," 2010). Immediately after the announcement, the experts worked on the 2009 Master Plan in IMP have resigned as a sign of protest (Kuyucu, 2017). A year later, the North Marmara Highway project has been introduced to

serve as a connection road to the planned Third Bridge ("3'üncü Köprü İçin 5 Milyar," 2012). In Figure 5, the location of these projects is shown on the 2009 Master Plan. This figure shows that the project site is labeled as forestry area, water basin, and agriculture, and pastureland.

In March 2013, the projects were officially started, and the projects are deemed to be out of the scope of the required environmental impact assessment (EIA) with quick approval of an omnibus bill. This omnibus bill consisted a temporal addition to the Law of Environment which state that "the projects that have passed the planning stage and entered into the tender process," like the Third Bridge and the North Marmara Highway Projects, are given exemption from the EIA process (Resmi Gazete, 2019a, p. 5916). This omnibus bill and the other regulations that made this exemption possible are investigated in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 in detail.



Fig. 5 Third Bridge and North Marmara Highway on 2009 Master Plan
Source: TEMA, 2014

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approval of an omnibus bill. This omnibus bill consisted a temporal addition to the Law of Environment which state that “the projects that have passed the planning stage and entered into the tender process,” like the Third Bridge and the North Marmara Highway Projects, are given exemption from the EIA process (Resmi Gazete, 2019a, p. 5916). This omnibus bill and the other regulations that made this exemption possible are investigated in Chapter 4 in detail. Though, it is crucial here to mention that these legal changes were mostly top-down and furthered the tensions between the civil society and the state while also depriving the civil society of the means of effective formal participation. The reason why these legal changes hurt civil society participation is that the EIA process enables further civil society participation through objections to the EIA reports. Many CSOs, including TEMA, WWF-Turkey, and TMMOB, criticized the exemption of the Third Bridge project from the EIA requirement. KOS and İKS, came together to conduct a petition protest against the EIA exemption of the projects ("3'üncü Köprüye Karşı", 2014).

The Master Plan of 2009 is revised following these projects, as well. An article added to the plan notes about “the evaluation of additional Bosphorus crossing and routes in the subscale plans”⁴ (IBB, 2009b). This addition aimed to by-pass the explicit objection of the 2009 Master Plan to the construction of a third bridge in the northern parts of the city. This change in the plan has been sued, but the case is concluded on behalf of the change. To demonstrate dissatisfaction with the projects, the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB) has dismissed the urban planners that made the construction plan of the projects from the profession for three months (Şanlıkan, 2018). Moreover, TEMA, which is generally

⁴ Translated from: “İlave Boğaz Geçiş ve Güzergâhları alt ölçekli planlarda değerlendirilmesi”

known as a moderate environmental CSO with more friendly relations with the state, has published a report that draws attention to the threats posed to the environment of Istanbul by these projects.

Regardless of the tensions within civil society, in November 2014, the then Minister of Transport, Marine and Communication, Lütfi Elvan, announced that the bridge will be open within a year and the paving process of North Marmara Highway project was started ("3. Köprü Seneye," 2014). The council of ministers has decided on the "urgent expropriation" of the lands within the North Marmara Highway project area, which consists of the properties in seven districts of Istanbul ("Üçüncü Boğaz Köprüsü," 2015). The project area has been extended as it became apparent that a port will be built near to the Third Bridge, and construction will be allowed along the highway.

In March 2015, the restrictions on the construction near the third bridge and along the highway were lifted with an omnibus bill, which consists of an addition to the Law of Forests. The added part states that "in state forests, permission is given to the (...) on service facilities with maintenance structures and maintenance operation facilities, provided that they remain within the road boundary lines. The facilities that are built and operated by state administrations and public institutions and organizations or built and operated according to the build-operate-transfer model are not charged any price"⁵ (Resmi Gazete, 2019b, p. 3098). The omnibus bill opened

⁵ Translated from: "Devlet ormanlarında, erişme kontrolü uygulanan karayollarındaki ulaştırma yapıları ve müstemilatı olan hizmet tesisleri ile bakım işletme tesislerine, karayolu sınır çizgisi içinde kalmak kaydıyla izin verilir. Devlet idareleri ile kamu kurum ve kuruluşlarınca yapılan, işletilen, işlettirilen veya yap-işlet-devret modeli esas alınarak yaptırılan ve işlettirilen bu tesislerden herhangi bir bedel alınmaz."

the forests along the highway to the construction and kept the investors exempt from charges concerning the use of land.

TOMMB's Istanbul branch of the Chamber of Urban Planners sued several connection roads in the project by claiming that they are contrary to the Master Plan. Their objection is approved by the administrative court with an annulment decision ("Danıştay Son Noktayı Koydu," 2015). On the one hand, The General Directorate for Highways has made a public announcement stating that the annulment decision is only limited to a small project area and, therefore, the rest of the project will remain as such ("Karayolları Hukuk'a Takılmadı," 2015). On the other hand, the environmental social movements and TMMOB argued that the decision is binding for all the projects and requested a sudden cessation of the project. The environmental social movements made protests asking the proper implementation of the court decision (KOS Medya, 2015b). Without any disruption in the construction process, IBB has approved the new plan with slight differences in the annulled connection roads and a new Master plan that validates the construction of the highway and connection roads. In August 2016, the bridge is opened in a ceremony with the participation of the then President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu ("Yavuz Sultan Selim köprüsü açıldı," 2016).

3.2 The third airport project

The Third Airport (Istanbul Airport) project has been introduced by the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in October 2010 ("Erdoğan: Üçüncü bir havalimanı," 2010). A year after, the then Minister of Transport Binali Yıldırım, has announced that they have decided on the location of the new airport, which will be announced to the public very soon ("Binali Yıldırım: Üçüncü havalimanının," 2012).

Shortly after, the location of the new airport project is made public with the council of minister's decision concerning the date of the tender ("İşte üçüncü havalimanı," 2012). In Figure 6, the location of the Third airport project is shown on the 2009 Master Plan, which indicates that the project site was labeled as forestry area and water basin area in the plan. Immediately after the announcement, the Housing Development Administration (TOKİ) has started to send expropriation documents to the villagers dwelling in the project area, and the villagers told that they will apply to the court ("Köylülerin 3. Havalimanı Tepkisi," 2015). Few weeks after, with the decision of the council of ministers published on Official Gazette in 17.01.2014 numbered 2014/5768, the properties in the project area had become subjects of "urgent expropriation" ("3.Havalimanını Hızlandıracak," 2014). Despite the public opposition and suspension of execution decision by the Council of State Administrative Law Office (DİDDK), in June 2014, the foundations of the projects are laid ("3. Havalimanı Projesinin," 2014). Simultaneously, environmental social movements organized public protests and CSOs, like TOMMB Urban Planners Office, harshly criticized the project and the non-participatory planning process. CSOs like TEMA and TMMOB published reports on the destructive effects of this project on the ecology of Istanbul (TEMA, 2014; TMMOB, 2014).

The tensions between the villager, the civil society, the private investors, and the state have increased so much that the EIA information meeting could not be conducted (KOS Medya, 2015a). The final EIA report draws attention to the possible threats the project can pose to the forest and water ecosystems in the region, though labels the project as "EIA Positive." According to the EIA report, the project area is 7650 hectares, and 6172 hectares of this area consists of forests, 660 hectare consists of lakes, and the rest are the areas used for mining and agriculture as well as posture

areas (TMMOB Jeoloji Mühendisleri Odası, 2014). The project area is extended to include more green areas as the resource need increases for the construction and the process continued with sequential urgent expropriation decisions.



Fig. 6 Third Airport project on 2009 Master Plan
Source: TEMA, 2014

For the new areas included in the project, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization decided as either “there is no need for EIA” or as “EIA conclusion is positive.” Some trials are opened against these decisions by the CSOs and EMOs have ended up justifying the objection and the decisions were invalidated by the courts. Though, as I have explained in detail in Chapter 5, legal participation mechanisms suffered from crucial weaknesses as slight differences in the plan were enough to bypass the annulment decisions. Even when the eviction of the Atatürk Airport started to direct all operations to the new airport, reports were published concerning the false choice of location, its potentially detrimental effects on the environment and the full functioning of the airport (WWF, 2018).

3.3 The canal Istanbul project

Known as the “crazy project,” the Canal Istanbul Project is announced in April 2011 by the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan ("şte Erdoğan'ın Çılgın Projesi," 2011). This project aims to build an artificial waterway that connects the Marmara Sea with the Black Sea and provides an alternative to the Bosphorus. The AKP government portrayed the project as an attempt of liberalization from the restrictions of the Montreux Straits Convention and the Lausanne Treaty. Furthermore, the project has been glorified on the basis that it will lead to economic development, make the city a global center of attraction, create employment and investment. The immediate outcomes of this proposed “crazy project” were the speculative radical rise of land prices on the outskirts of the city and the acceleration of urban expansion along North-South axis. In the 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul, the vast majority of the project area was defined as the protected area and the rest was labeled as a drinking water basin, agricultural land, and rural residential area (IBB, 2009a).

Accordingly, many CSOs and academics made statements on the destructive effects of this project on biodiversity in the region, the ecosystem of the Marmara Sea and the Black Sea, and the general sustainability of Istanbul. Among those, the reports of TEMA and WWF came to the forefront because of both the reports' comprehensive contents and these CSOs' long-lasting good relations with the state. The report of TEMA is named “The Three Projects That Will Affect the Future of Istanbul: Third Bridge, Third Airport, Canal Istanbul” and had a very critical standing towards these projects by drawing attention the threat posed to the Istanbul's life support systems, namely the Northern Forests, water basins, agriculture and pasture areas, groundwaters and the biodiversity (TEMA, 2014).

Likewise, WWF, in a report named “Either Canal or Istanbul: The Ecologic, Social and Economic Evaluation of Canal Istanbul Project,” warns the state officials not to sacrifice ecology to the socio-economic development (WWF, 2018). This extended report also draws attention to the fact the civil society experiences great difficulties and ambiguities in trying to get any information about the project and argues that the projects that can have enormous implications on the life of the people and the future of the city should be discussed thoroughly with the active participation of the experts, academics and the CSOs (WWF, 2018). Shortly after these reports have been published, the then Prime Minister Erdoğan has made several public speeches announcing that the foundations of the projects will be laid in a short time ("Kanal İstanbul'da Çılgın Gelişme," 2014). The harsh opposition has unofficially suspended the project for a while, but the then Prime Minister Erdoğan, then Minister of Transportation, then General Directory of Highways, and many other high ranked officials have occasionally made public announcements about the project during this time of unofficial suspension.

In the 2016 Action Plan of the government, the Canal Istanbul plan has been, once again, announced (Başbakanlık, 2016). The plan states that the legal amendments on PPP operation for this project should and will be made within a year (Başbakanlık, 2016). In March 2016, the construction law was changed with an omnibus bill along with the changes in several crucial articles in the EIA regulation. These changes targeted to qualify the project area as a possible construction area and to supersede the necessary procedures of expert approval ("Kanal İstanbul İçin," 2016; "Danıştay'dan Torba Yasa," 2016). These also led to tensions between civil society and the state. TMMOB and the opposition parties have voiced dissent and disapproval about the legislative changes. Regardless of these objections, in

December 2017, the route of the canal had been officially announced ("Kanal İstanbul'un Güzergahları," 2018). The prolonged EIA process has been initiated several months later in February 2018 ("Kanal İstanbul İçin ÇED," 2018). Afterward, more details have been revealed on the satellite city that is planned to be established along the canal coast by TOKİ ("Kanal İstanbul'u Tüm Dünya," 2018).

Facing severe technical and economic questions as well as public discontent, the project has been disappeared from the discussions for a year. Though, it has, again, become a central issue of discussion when the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure made the EIA report public. Figure 7 shows the site map of the Canal Istanbul project in this report. The report clarified that the canal is planned to pass through the Küçükçekmece Lake and Sazlıdere Dam, which are the main wetland areas in Istanbul with an expected cost of 75 billion Turkish Liras (T.C. Ulaştırma ve Altyapı Bakanlığı Altyapı Yatırımları Genel Müdürlüğü, 2019). EIA report published on 23 December 2019 stated that the project has “no significant negative impact on natural life, environment, ecology, and social life” (T.C. Ulaştırma ve Altyapı Bakanlığı Altyapı Yatırımları Genel Müdürlüğü, 2019, p. 267). The report has been presented to the public for 10 days which is a formal procedure that aims to ensure that all those interested can deliver their comments and objections by petition to the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization (T.C. Çevre ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı, 2019).

After the AKP lost its' hold on IBB in March 2019 local elections, IBB has become a new actor in the conflicts over the megaprojects. It has organized various meetings, called people to make use of official procedures of public objection, and provided alternative information over the content and cost of the projects. Following the release of the EIA report, discussions over the canal project intensified as the

mayor of IBB, Ekrem Imamoğlu, announced that IBB has withdrawn from the cooperation protocol signed with the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (IBB, 2019a). IBB has organized the Canal Istanbul Workshop in which academics, experts and the opposition parties' leaders came together to discuss the project (IBB, 2019b).



Fig. 7 Canal Istanbul project site map

Source: T.C. Ulaştırma ve Altyapı Bakanlığı Altyapı Yatırımları Genel Müdürlüğü, 2019

Many CSOs, including TMMOB, Istanbul Bar Association, Greenpeace, WWF, TEMA, as well as IBB called all citizens to object EIA report within the assigned 10 days. As a result, more than 100 thousands official objections have been made to the Directorates of the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning ("Kanal İstanbul'a itiraz," 2019). Though, still, the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning has approved the EIA report on 17 January 2020 ("Kanal İstanbul ÇED Raporu," 2020).

All in all, Istanbul has experienced a multifaceted transformation between 2009 and 2019. This unique form of neoliberal urbanization, which blends neoliberal urban policies and authoritarianism has created unique forms of contentious dynamics in the city. The decision-making processes of megaprojects portrait well how the formal participation mechanisms have frustrated the attempts of formal CSOs for effective participation and resistance to urban environmental degradation. Hence, this study strives to analyze the effects of the embeddedness of civil society actors into weak formal institutions by taking the environmental governance of Istanbul as a case.

CHAPTER 4

THE HISTORY OF URBAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN TURKEY

In this chapter, I present the historical evolution of the urban and environmental governance and environmental civil society in Turkey. According to the Yale Environmental Performance Index (EPI) in 2018, Turkey's current rank of environmental performance is 108 out of the 132 countries in the world (EPI, 2018). Compared to the countries with similar GDP per capita and population density, Turkey performs considerably worse on environmental health and ecosystem vitality (EPI, 2018). Although this statistical information portrays well the relative deficiency of Turkey in sustainable environmental governance, the historical evolutions of urban and environmental governance mechanisms and institutions, as well as of the environmental civil society are essential to analyze the current situation.

Paker et al. (2013) accurately diagnoses that “unable and/or unwilling to deal properly with pressures posed by the energy, industry, agriculture, transportation, and tourism sectors, as well as urbanization, Turkey is overwhelmed by environmental challenges” (p. 763). In Turkey, the process of neoliberalization has put considerable pressure on the environment as the state and the private sectors continuously push for economic development and disregard the environmental concerns for long (Adaman et al., 2017). The state institutions responsible for the environmental governance in Turkey have been recently established and these newly established institutions have furthered the paradoxical coexistence of decentralization and recentralization. Hence, the institutions and bureaucracies of environmental

governance have served not as the sources of decentralization and participation but as the extensions of the state power imposed upon the neoliberal subjects (Unalan, 2016). The experiences of environmental CSOs and EMOs substantiate this argument, as discussed extensively in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

4.1 Neoliberalization and institutionalization of environmental governance

The first attempt of the Turkish state to govern the environment could be traced back to the introduction of the first Municipal Law in 1930. The law numbered 1580 gives some primary responsibilities to the municipal bodies to protect the environment. Though, in this law, environmental protection is not an end in itself, but a means for the achievement of the protection of public health. In 1930, a second attempt to govern the environment was made by a law numbered 1953, which introduced some measures for the environmental problems that directly harm the health of the people. Simultaneously, the Turkish state underwent a process of relative democratization and liberalization, which lead to the introduction of the first Law on Associations in 1949. This law allowed for the nonpolitical CSOs to be formed and operated relatively freely, yet the environmental activists were not active in civil society until the early 1970s (Unalan, 2016).

In 1956, the Law on the Forests was introduced as the urbanization process of the 1950s causes an unprecedented forest loss in urban areas. These initial attempts to govern the environment by the state often fell short of changing the trajectory of environmental degradation because of the failures at implementation and monitoring processes. The rapid urbanization process and the industrialization in the 1950s have been deleterious to the environment as well as the general health. Hence, the 1961 constitution attempted to solve this problem by referring to the need for the state to

be more involved with environmental governance. Hence, Article 49 of the 1961 Constitution has entitled the state to be responsible for protecting the environment as a part of the people's right to health. Though, this constitutional change was not enough to build a well-structured system of environmental governance as well (Adaman & Arsel, 2016).

The process of industrialization and urbanization fostered the flourishing of CSOs in the 1960s until the military coup of 1971 (İçduygu, Meydanoğlu, & Sert, 2011). The military coup of 1971 has initiated a long-lasting process of the closing down of the civic space, which is even furthered after the military coup of 1980. Environmental CSOs have emerged in the early 1970s in line with global trends (Adaman & Arsel, 2016). Global attention to environmental governance has gained impetus in the 1970s, and various international bodies aiming to deal with environmental problems, like the United Nations Environmental Program, have been established. The increasing institutionalization of environmental concerns has generated pressure for the states to be more engaged with environmental governance and urged them to try to fulfill some brand-new environmental criteria (Gibson et al., 2013). During the 1980s and 1990s, this neoliberal global turn in environmental governance has given rise to various “regimes such as the Montreal Protocol (in 1987), Basel Convention (in 1989), the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (in 1982), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (in 1992)” (Ciplet & Roberts, 2017, p. 149).

At the end of the 1970s and 1980s, a more integrated environmental governance system has been established in Turkey as the country followed the global trend of neoliberalization and institutionalization of environmental governance. In

1978, an Undersecretariat of Environment had been established under the Prime Ministry to ensure that the environmental policies are cohesive, applicable, and monitored by a single body. Though, the rules and regulations formulated by the Undersecretariat of Environment were not enough to offset the adverse effects of neoliberal development since the environmental problems were seen at the secondary importance to the economic aspirations (Ozbay et al., 2016). The introduction of laws regulating environmental governance in the 1982 Constitution is, also, in line with this global trend. Article 56 of 1982 Constitution, which is about the right of health and accommodation, has introduced a participatory understanding of environmental governance by attributing the duty to take precautionary steps to protect the environment not only to the state but also to the citizens.

In 1983, the Law on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Properties (law no.2863), has been introduced to ensure protection of the environment and to encourage sustainable models of natural resource usage and production. This law, again, gave the responsibility to protect the environment both to the state and to the citizens. Though, this *de jure* diffusion of responsibilities did not reflect *de facto* decentralization and increasing prospects for participation. Instead, these laws embody a top-down understanding of environmental governance, with a considerable emphasis put on the mechanisms of command and control (Ozbay et al., 2016). While the constitution aims to decentralize the environmental responsibility and governance, the previous Law on Associations has been replaced by a new law in 1983 which was authorizing the state to effectively control and, if necessary, shutter the CSOs.

Adaman and Arsel (2016) state that the environmental problems have been started to be taken seriously only after the 1980s in Turkey, since, only then the environmental degradation has started to pose a threat to the prospects of capital accumulation. The historical evolution of the institutions of environmental governance supports this argument as, only in 1991, a ministry responsible for environmental governance, the Ministry of the Environment, has been established with a statutory decree numbered 443. This change has created a more centralized environmental governance system with the increased budget and influence of the Ministry in environmental protection and maintenance.

The first attempts of environmental protests in Turkey, flamed by the arguments over the establishment of thermal power plants, have occurred at the beginning of the 1990s (Unalan, 2016). Although many environmental legislations have been passed in the 1990s, the implementation remained low and the environmental governance remained highly centralized (Ozbay et al., 2016). In 1994, the first Green Party of Turkey had been closed and this has triggered the emergence of environmental associations that are more critical to state power and neoliberalism. From then on, the environmental CSOs have been divided into two based on their relationship with the state, their level of politicization and their goals: the conservationists and the radical environmentalists (Unalan, 2016). While the large-scale environmental CSOs which were mainly conservationists were dominant within the environmental civil society until the mid-2000s, the radical environmentalists that consist of local social movements were mainly the product of the era after that (Kadirbeyoğlu et al., 2017).

4.2 Limited decentralization and recentralization of urban and environmental governance after the 2000s

The AKP came into power in 2002 in a context of low implementation problems and a “divided environment” within civil society (Lust-Okar, 2004). Pushing for Turkey’s introduction to the European Union (EU), the AKP has tried to fulfill the environmental criteria of the union by introducing new laws and regulations and tried to establish a relatively liberal environment for the operation of CSOs (Aydın-Düzgüt & Keyman, 2012; Bayram, Altıkat, & Torun, 2011). Several changes have been made in the name, capacity, and discretion of the Ministry of the Environment. In 2004, the Ministry of the Environment was combined with the Ministry of Forestry and the Law on the Organization and Duties of the Ministry of Environment and the Forest (law no. 4856) has given the Ministry higher authority on the extended area of issues and the state become a more active actor in environmental governance.

The state of civil society has been enhanced with the introduction of a new Law on Associations (law no.5253) in 2004. This law removed the limitations on civil society organizations by giving the monitoring authority to the supervisory board within the associations instead of the state. Moreover, it lifted the requirement of the existence of a government commissar in the general assembly of associations and gave the right to establish an association not only to the real people but also to the legal entities. The civil society organizations are entitled to the right to establish federations, to have international linkages, and to get monetary help from and give monetary help to the political parties, labor unions, and professional organizations. The law has lowered the restrictions on civil society by making advance notice and just cause necessary for the government audits and required a warrant from the police prior to a search in civil society organizations. It has also lifted restrictions on

the ability of CSOs to form platforms, which has increased the chances of CSOs to be influential in decision-making. Though, in 2005, an addendum to the Regulation on Associations have been introduced to give details on the law. This regulation put some limitations on the liberal understanding of the civil society organizations and retracted some of the rights given to the associations in the law via annotations (Gökalp, 2005). New limitations have been put on the establishment of CSOs based on their official name and objectives which are required not to be contradictory to the constitution. Altan-Olcay and İçduygu (2012) state that this regulation has been selectively enforced to put restrictions on specific religious and cultural groups in accordance with political developments.

Furthermore, in 2005, two other crucial legislations have been passed from the parliament: Municipality Law, numbered 5393, and Metropolitan Municipality Law, numbered 5216. These legislations have increased the power of the local governments in urban governance and introduced new mechanisms of participation for the citizens (Kuyucu, 2017). By replacing the emphasis put on the birthplace with the emphasis put on the place of residence, the Municipality Law has changed the determinants of urban citizenship and entitled all the residents with the right to involve in the decision making processes in urban governance (Kuyucu, 2017). Also, new channels of participation, such as the City Council meetings, have been introduced to enable regular and sustained participation and governance practices.

Though, this “limited decentralization” coexisted with a process of “centralization of land market regulations” and “this mismatch (...) could be sustained as long as the economy grew substantially, delivering adequate returns to all stakeholders in urban governance and the land/housing markets” (Kuyucu, 2017,

p. 45). According to Kuyucu (2017), the era after 2008, in urban governance, is defined by the reversal of most of the administrative reforms that led to a “partial decentralization and democratization” between 2001 and 2008 (p. 53). This reversal is caused by the reforms in urban governance that aim to dramatically recentralize the decision-making processes and, thus, generate economic growth. The earliest and the most dramatic signifiers of this radical change in urban policy-making processes were the megaprojects investigated in this thesis, which has ruled out the 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul with a top-down fashion.

The recentralization of urban governance is furthered when the Municipality Law was changed to transfer some of the administrative roles of lower-level local governments to the municipality and the central government. Kuyucu (2017) argues that “by making metropolitan administrations the sole decision-makers in urban renewal, the AKP government in effect centralized this power, at least for the most important cities, and effectively pushed district-level administrations out of decision making” (p. 61). In 2011, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry was abolished and replaced by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, which was in line with the increasing urban origin and projection of the environmental problems and the increasing centralization of urban governance. As the processes of urban development are under the responsibility of the same ministry that has the responsibility to ensure environmental protection, it has become easier “to bypass obstacles that large urban projects face due to their negative environmental impacts” (Kuyucu, 2017, p. 62).

This recentralization process had certain impacts on the patterns of participation. Participation has remained limited and been strictly controlled by the

state through the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. The ministry has the full discretion to determine whether different actors would be involved in the decision-making process of the development plans and megaprojects. If denied of participation, the actors can only oppose the development plans within a short duration when the projects are made public for any opinion or opposition to be communicated to the related state institution. This option of opposition is even absent in some of the urban renewal projects, especially after the Urban Transformation Act for the Areas under Disaster Risk, Law numbered 6306, has been adopted in May 2012 regardless of the harsh objections of the opposition parties and CSOs (Elicin, 2014). This law accelerated the recentralization process by giving the responsibility to determine the areas under the risk to the municipalities in 2012 and to the Presidency in 2018.

The Urban Transformation Act for the Areas under Disaster Risk has been formulated as a superior law that prevails in the case of any conflict of the laws. This means that, if an urban transformation project in the areas under the risk of disaster conflicts with “the laws on the littorals, agricultural lands, pastures, olive groves, protected natural and urban landscape areas and archaeological sites (protection areas) as well as the Act about the urban landscape of Bogazici” the Urban Transformation Act is placed above, and the project continues (Elicin, 2014, p. 151). One of the other vital aspects of this law is that the “areas under the risk” are defined very vaguely and open for interpretation.

All in all, while the urban and environmental governance in Turkey has been largely institutionalized and neoliberalized after the 1980s, decentralization has always remained limited. During the AKP era, decentralization existed along with

recentralization as a result of the constant setbacks that upholds bureaucratic and administrative supervision of the central state over the local administration and the continuous control and limitation of the participation mechanisms. The environmental legislation has been frustrated, in Turkey, both by the importance attached to the capital accumulation, job creation, and surplus value at the expense of the environmental protection and by the implementation problems. The environmental CSOs, struggling to be a part of the decision-making process, has been in a constant confrontation with the state in their demands for the implementation of the already existing laws and regulations and the introduction of further environmental regulations that can better protect the environment and ensure the participation of all parties affected by the neoliberal environmental policies (Ozen, 2009). In the following two chapters, I examined these struggles and CSOs' experiences in their attempts to achieve effective participation in the decision-making processes of the megaprojects.

CHAPTER 5

PARTICIPATION THROUGH FORMAL INSTITUTIONS: ENVIRONMENTAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

This chapter is the first of the two sequential chapters that examine the contestations over and through the megaprojects located in the Northern Forests of Istanbul and their environmental impacts. The previous chapters show that Istanbul has experienced a radical transformation as the city expands through Northern Forests within the last decade. While the city gets through such an unprecedented transformation, the experiences of civil society actors have also altered dramatically. This chapter is an attempt to analyze the changing participatory prospects of environmental CSOs and their use of various strategies in trying to participate in the decision-making processes of the megaprojects.

The case of the three biggest megaprojects located in the Northern Forests of Istanbul reveals that civil society participation through formal institutions remained highly ineffective between 2009 and 2019. Although the 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul was a formal institution that could be seen as a significant gain for the advocates of the protection of the Northern Forests, it has become apparent that the weaknesses of this institution have created vital deadlocks for the environmental civil society. In this chapter, I argue that the low durability and implementation problems in this plan have fostered a common mistrust towards participation through formal channels within the civil society. Then, I delineate the strategies of participation and resistance employed, first, by the conservationist CSOs and, then, by the radical environmentalist CSOs. This chapter strives especially for explaining how these strategies have become ineffective when confronted with the institutional

weaknesses. Burdensome bureaucratic procedures serve to control and limit the dissent and the manipulation of the legal processes facilitates adjourning and bypassing any opposition.

In this chapter, the deadlock experienced by the formal CSOs has explained with reference to the CSOs' embeddedness in the state structures and weaknesses of participatory institutions. In line with Young (2002) this thesis shows that the socio-political roles of CSOs should be investigated within the context they operate since their embeddedness to state structures. In the context of urban environmental governance of Istanbul, and especially of Northern Forests, the CSOs have employed some strategies that aim not directly greater participation and resistance, but indirectly, better and sustained relations with the state. This strategical choices derives from the fact that the CSOs struggles to maintain their self-organization when they try to actively function as an effective platform of participation. This strategical choices derives from the fact that the CSOs struggles to maintain their self-organization when they try to actively function as an effective platform of participation.

All in all, the Third Bridge and North Marmara Highway, Third Airport, and Canal Istanbul projects initiated and supported by the AKP government aimed to further neoliberal urbanization in Istanbul and, thus, foster economic development. Both the projects themselves and their top-down approach have generated great discontent within the society and diminished the viability of the formal participation mechanism through which CSOs try to participate in the decision-making processes. The main argument of this chapter is that the weakening of the participatory institutions has dramatically altered the socio-political roles of CSOs and changed

their strategical choices between 2009 and 2019, i.e., during the decade of megaprojects. I examine this change by looking at the increasingly exclusionary developmentalist discourse of the state and the inability of the CSOs to promote counter-hegemonic environmentalist discourse through formal mechanisms of participation. In the end, I argue that the increasing costs of participation through weak formal institutions may provide us an explanation on the emergence of more contentious forms of social mobilization attempts in Istanbul over the issue of three megaprojects in question. This argument is examined extensively in the next chapter.

5.1 Weak institutions and limits of formal participation

The 1/100.000 scaled 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul has been unanimously approved by IBB and adopted with the final approval of the then mayor, Kadir Topbaş. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Master Plan of Istanbul has been prepared by IMP which was an institution affiliated to IBB. This organization has brought together academics and experts and upheld a cautious attitude towards urban expansion in Istanbul because of the growing concerns on urban sustainability. The Master Plan has been written in accordance with these concerns and aimed to limit the urban expansion along North-South axis in Istanbul, as explained in detail in Chapter 3. In the Master Plan, there is an extensive focus on the principle of governance and the importance of integrating the state, private sector, and civil society into the decision-making processes. It is, also, argued, in the plan, that further participation will be ensured with the employment of the “circular approach”⁶ to the decision cycle. This circular approach is based on the idea that none of the decisions are final and there

⁶ Translated from: “döngüsel yaklaşım”

are chances and need for constant revisions after the observation of any problems in the implementation process. IMP, the institution that is responsible for the preparation of the 2009 Master Plan, did not employ any formal or theoretical model for building the correct participatory mechanisms that can create systematic participation in urban and environmental governance.

One of the interviewees, who is an academic that actively participated in the writing process of the 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul, stated that “There was no conscious participatory model. Instead, participation is supported in practice and we have tried to make it possible for various actors such as chambers, members of the parliament, members of the municipality council, and scholars.”⁷ (Interview 15). Hence, TMMOB, one of the CSOs that is considered within the group of radical environmentalists CSOs in this thesis, filed a suit against the plan just after its approval. In the announcement of this lawsuit, TMMOB stated that no opinion has been taken from them during the preparation process of the plan ("Topbaş'ın Planlarına 17 Sert," 2009; TMMOB Şehir Plancıları Odası, 2009). Hence, the 2009 Master Plan has suffered from ambiguities in *de jure* rules and procedures of participation because of the existence of a “divided environment” (Lust-Okar, 2004).

In Chapter 3, I explained in detail how the 2009 Master Plan has suffered from low implementation and low durability problems as the megaprojects have been approved successively regardless of their unconformity to the plan. The 2009 Master Plan has been changed afterwards to provide legitimacy to the ongoing projects. The increasing “*de facto* discretion” of the government over the implementation can be

⁷ Translated from: “Bilinçli bir katılım modeli tam olarak uygulanmadı yani. Bunun yerine katılım çok savunuldu ve çeşitli aktörler için pratikte olabildiğince sağlanmaya çalışıldı. Mesela odalar, belediye meclis, her partinin milletvekilleri davet edildi.”

seen as the main indicator of the institutional weakness (Levitsky & Murillo, 2013). Hence, the AKP government has introduced and actively promoted the megaprojects that are against the basic premises of the plan.

A careful investigation of the era between 2009 and 2019 reveals that increasing *de facto* discretion of the government has fostered a common mistrust towards participation through formal institutions. What was particularly interesting, though, is that this experience was common among the members of both the conservationist CSOs and the radical environmentalist CSOs. An interviewee worked on the 2009 Master Plan have explained the effect of the 2009 Master Plan's implementation problems on his/her following decisions about participation as such:

Now, they are planning to write another master plan for Istanbul. They have contacted me and even asked me to get involved in the process, but I did not accept as a person who has worked hard on the 2009 plan and who still supports it. So, I told them I would not participate.⁸ (Interview 15)

Similar responses were taken from several other interviewees as they mention how they quit taking place in the formal participatory mechanisms and institutions as they realize the problems in implementation and, thus, question the real impact of participation. More detail on the decreasing motivations about participation through formal participation mechanisms is given below when I discuss the strategies of report-writing and lobbying as well as legal participation mechanisms.

The case of decision-making processes in urban environmental governance in Istanbul shows the crucial interaction between the weak institutions and the

⁸ Translated from: “Şimdi İstanbul için başka bir plan yazmayı planlıyorlar. Benimle iletişime geçildi ve sürece dahil olmam istendi ama 2009 planını savunan ve o plana emek vermiş birisi olarak ben kabul etmedim. Bu sebeple, katılamayacağımı ama bölüm üyelerimize duyuracağımı söyledim.”

decreasing incentives to take part in formal participatory mechanisms. Low durability of the 2009 Master Plan, as well, contributed considerably to the low incentives for formal participation by increasing “uncertainty” and decreasing “time horizons” of the civil society actors (Levitsky & Murillo, 2013). As explained below in detail, within the last decade, civil society actors have experienced increased uncertainties with regard to their relationship with the state and the outcomes of their attempts to participate in the decision-making processes. Thus, I argue that the weak institutions with implementation problems could harm, instead of ensuring environmental protection by discouraging the participation of the actors with know-how information into the decision-making processes.

Only after several months of the approval of the 2009 Master Plan, the Third Bridge project has been announced to the public. The Master Plan was strictly against the construction of a third bridge and draw attention to the fact that the processes after the construction of the first and the second bridges prove that these investments further the urban expansion towards the Northern Forests and led to problems related to water basins of the city (IBB, 2009a). Hence, in the report’s SWOT Analysis, any top-down Third Airport project is written under the label of potential “risks” for the city (IBB, 2009a). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the experts and CSO representatives working in IMP have resigned from their posts just after the announcement of the Third Bridge project. Many CSOs have opposed the project by basing their arguments on the 2009 Master Plan. The 2009 Master Plan has been revised several times to legalize the already started construction of these projects. These revisions to the 2009 Master Plan could partly be explained through the high *de facto* discretion of the government in the case of urban environmental governance of Istanbul (Levitsky & Murillo, 2013). The historical evolution of the projects, as

outlined in Chapter 3, supports this argument considering that the plan has been revised many times to accommodate megaprojects that are announced regardless of their fit to the plan instead of functioning as a criterion of land use in Istanbul.

The top-down changes in the large-scale and small-scale plans of Istanbul and laws and regulations about urban and environmental governance have contributed to this already weak institutional environment by increasing the uncertainty and decreasing the time horizons of the civil society actors. For example, in March 2013, a change in the EIA regulation made after the introduction of the Third Bridge project has created considerable tensions within the civil society since the change enabled the exemption of the Third Bridge project from the EIA processes. Deprived of one of the crucial channels of formal participation, i.e., EIA processes, the CSOs, including the conservationist CSOs such as TEMA and WWF-Turkey, have harshly criticized the legal change. TEMA, i.e., the conservationist CSO with the most sustained relations with the state, has labeled the Third Bridge project “illegal” by drawing attention to the fact that it is not congruent with the 2009 Master Plan and it does not have positive EIA report (TEMA, 2013).

In a public announcement on May 2013, TEMA voiced its objection to the EIA exemption by saying “exempting an investment that may have an enormous impact, such as the Third Bridge, from the EIA requirement only because it was included in the investment program before a certain date will seriously threaten the future of Istanbul” (TEMA, 2013). Though, a revision of the 2009 Master Plan had already provided the project with the necessary legality. This revision in the plan has been sued by TMMOB, TEMA, and WWF-Turkey, but the cases are concluded on behalf of the change regardless of the “expert opinion in favor of the objections to

the change” (TEMA, 2013). Thus, in the long run, the plan has served to the legitimization of the projects that cause urban expansion and vast deforestation in the city instead of ensuring planned and sustainable urban governance.

In Chapter 2, I introduced the theoretical discussions over the CSOs’ embeddedness to the state structures. Considering this embeddedness, I presented the arguments on the crucial role of the domestic context and the state institutions in determining *de facto* socio-political roles of the CSOs and the modes and limits of civil society participation in a country. As I investigate the CSOs’ strategies of participation and resistance below in this chapter, it becomes apparent that their participation remained post-facto and limited with one-way information sharing and pseudo meetings in the case of three megaprojects in question. When asked whether the CSOs they are working for had known about the projects before they are announced to the public, all of the members of formal CSOs that I interviewed stated that they did not. The interviewee worked on the 2009 Master Plan also stated that the projects were unforeseeable for those in the IMP. When I made secondary-source research on this issue, it has become evident that the members of IMP seem to have no prior knowledge about the projects since most of them have resigned after the announcement of the Third Bridge project that is against the plan ("Topbaş 3. Köprüye Karşıydı," 2009). An interviewee emphasized the top-down decision-making processes of these projects as such “No opinion has been taken from us. They did not even ask the opinion of the village people living in the project sites and the public. This is the problem with these projects.” (Interview 13)⁹.

⁹ Translated from: “Bu projeler hakkında bizden hiçbir görüş alınmadı. Proje sahasında yaşayan köylülerden, halktan alınmadı ki. Bu projelerdeki sıkıntı da bu.”

The strategies investigated below, i.e., report writing, public sphere activism, and legal participation mechanisms, are all attempts of civil society actors to participate in the decision-making processes *post facto*. While, in other cases, the interviewees from conservationist CSOs give examples of instances that they have participated in the policy-making process through mutual information-sharing and lobbying, they have suffered from very similar problems with the radical environmentalist CSOs in the case of the decision-making process of the three largest megaprojects in Istanbul. An interviewee from a conservationist CSOs delineated the practices of one-way information sharing by giving an example from the EIA public information meetings of the megaprojects in the following words:

Officially, when a project is done, a public meeting should be held in the related area after the ministry publishes it on its website. But, generally, the investor firm gives some information, take questions, and continue with the project as it was. That is to say, how much are these views taken into account, then how much is followed? (Interview 10)¹⁰

This experience is highly in line with what the other interviewees say about the EIA processes of these megaprojects. The quote also reveals the skepticism, as mentioned earlier, about the implementation problems of formal participation mechanisms. Furthermore, even for this post-facto one-way information sharing, the CSOs are selectively included in the processes. While conservationist CSOs complain about the ineffectiveness of the one-way information sharing processes, the interviewees from radical environmentalist CSOs and EMOs also mentioned the occasions when

¹⁰ Translated from: “Resmi olarak, bir proje yapılacağı zaman bunun bir tanıtım toplantısı oluyor bakanlık bunun websitesine koyduktan sonra. Ardından da yatırımın yapılacağı yörede bir Halkın Katılım Toplantısı düzenleniyor. İlgili tüm taraflar gelip görüşlerini bildirebiliyor. Ama genellikle yani yatırımcı firma gelip burada bilgi veriyor soruları alıyor sonra da projesine devam ediyor. Yani bu görüşler ne kadar dikkate alınıyor, daha sonra takibi ne kadar yapılıyor?”

they try to participate in the EIA meetings of the megaprojects, which are open to the public and were not allowed to go in.

Moreover, the interviews revealed that the pseudo-meetings are, also, very common, which, again, leads to discouragements in the attempts of CSOs to participate in the formal decision-making processes. An interviewee expressed the prevalence of this practice and its effects on the CSOs involvement into the formal participation mechanisms in the following words:

They write the project is designed with the participation of CSOs in the reports, but most of the time, this is not what actually happens. We know that they invite us to most of the meetings only to be able to say that. We go there, they tell us somethings, and end the meeting before even give us a chance to talk. Only because we know that this is the case, we have started not to attend some of the meetings. (Interview 13)¹¹

The practice of pseudo-meetings was a common complaint among the interviewees and is, also, observed during the document research. The motivation for these pseudo-meetings could be seen as the desired image of participation and inclusion. In the literature, it is argued that the CSOs' participation in the weak formal institutions have provided the state with the image of inclusion and participation and, thus, serve to maintain the status-quo (Burch, 2000; Lewis, 2013; Young, 2002). This opinion was also widespread among the interviewees. Hence, an interviewee from a radical environmentalist CSO stated his/her opinion that IMP, in the first place, may be built for the legitimization of the developmental projects considering that "participation

¹¹ Translated from: "Ya raporlarda öyle yazıyorlar, STK'ların katılımıyla hazırlandı diyorlar ama aslında birçok zaman öyle olmuyor. Mesela birçok toplantıya bizi sırf bunu söyleyebilmek için çağırdıklarını biliyoruz. Gidiyoruz toplantıya, bir şeyler anlatıyorlar, daha bizim konuşmamıza fırsat bile vermeden toplantı bitiyor. Sırf böyle olacağını bildiğimiz için bazı toplantılara gitmemeye başladık"

and expert knowledge brings with it a great legitimization”¹² (Interviewee 13). The crucial role of the CSOs’ in providing the image of inclusion and participation is explicit in the 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul. In the report of the 2009 Master Plan, it is emphasized repetitively that the plan is written with the active participation of CSOs and experts.

Although the image of participation is desired during the writing process of the 2009 Master Plan, it is not required during the planning and implementation processes of the megaprojects. For example, all of the CSOs investigated in this thesis have objected to the Third Bridge project with reports, lawsuits, or protests. These attempts to participate in the decision-making processes were not seen by the authorities as a means to generate public discussion, participation, and to acquire the image of inclusion. Instead, the neoliberal developmentalist discourse employed heavily by the AKP has targeted the CSO activities on the grounds that they are against the economic development and become “a stooge,” as stated by the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the groundbreaking ceremony of the Third Airport project, of those against Turkey’s development. Similarly, in the opening ceremony of the Third Bridge, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said, “There were those who made fun of it. Some said we would not get it done. Some came here and demonstrated. But we said no way back from this. We said we would do it” by mentioning the radical environmentalist CSOs along with the EMOs that organized protests in the project area ("Yavuz Sultan Selim Köprüsü," 2016; "İstanbul’da 3. Köprü Protestosu," 2010)¹³. While labeling the opposition to the megaprojects as

¹² Translated from: “Katılım ve uzman görüşü aslında büyük bir meşruluk getiriyor.”

¹³ Translated from: “Dalga geçenler oldu. Yaptırmayacağız diyenler oldu. Buralara gelip gösteri yapanlar oldu. Ama biz dedik ki bu yoldan dönmek yok. Yapacağız dedik.”

hostile to economic development, the AKP government has generated legitimacy not from the image of inclusion and participation resulting from the civil society participation, but, instead, from the endorsement of an exclusive developmentalist discourse.

This changing attitude towards the image of inclusion and participation of civil society actors into the decision-making processes could be attributed to the acknowledgment of the unexpected costs of participation. In the case of the 2009 Master Plan, there was an apparent discrepancy between what was expected from civil society participation in the first place and what was found after it. The costs of participation for the government have remarkably increased when the expected political and economic returns of the projects were high for the government, and the expected environmental costs are realized to be non-negligible by civil society actors. Several interviewees also touched upon this issue and argued that “once they see that the outcome is different than what they have expected, they simply decided not to implement it.”¹⁴ (Interview 5). The above-mentioned circular approach of decision-making in the 2009 Master Plan, which was initially expected to improve the prospects of participation for CSOs into the decision-making processes, multiplied with the high *de facto* discretion of the government, have made this choice of low implementation possible.

All in all, these two common models of participation, i.e., one-way information sharing and pseudo meetings, are forms of what Paker et al. (2013) call “participation on paper,” which refers to how the participation occurred according to

¹⁴ Translated from: “ Sonucun beklentilerinden farklı olduklarını görünce bu planı hiç uygulamaya koymamaya karar verdiler”

the terms of the state on specific occasions. Thus, the interviews, field observations, and document research revealed that the CSOs experience considerable difficulties in trying to achieve effective participation through formal institutions in the case of the largest three megaprojects in Istanbul. The weak institutions and the limited post-facto participation mechanisms, unsurprisingly, had novel impacts on the CSOs' role to function as a new participatory platform with the creation of a public sphere that can generate counter-hegemonic discourses (Lewis, 2013; Young, 2002). The CSOs' strategies to achieve more effective participation and resistance in the case of urban environmental governance of Istanbul are investigated below separately.

5.2 Strategies of participation and resistance: conservationist CSOs

TEMA and WWF-Turkey has been evaluated here under the category of "conservationist CSOs" since they historically have relatively good and sustained relations with the state. Compared to the so-called "radical-environmentalist CSOs", these CSOs are more hierarchically organized, have more branches, more full-time workers, more volunteers, more funds, and, therefore; their interaction with the state is more multifaceted. As oppose to the more small-scale environmental CSOs, they cooperate with the state and business on various issue areas.

The members of the so-called "conservationist CSOs" evaluated the role of the CSOs as "to warn and tell the truth with evidence," which is seen as what the politicians need to do the right things. The reasoning behind this conceptualization of CSOs' roles is the belief that "If a mistake is made (by the state), it is because they

believe that it is good, because of the misinformation.”¹⁵, as stated by an interviewee from a conservationist CSO (Interview 7). This composition of the roles of CSOs is very different from the conceptualization of the radical environmentalist CSOs and EMOs. Unlike conservationist CSOs, they portrayed the CSOs to be the agents to foster public consciousness and greater public participation in the processes of decision-making and governance. States are not neutral actors and act according to a particular set of policy choices over the others. Hence, the processes after the publication of reports on the potentially environmentally hazardous consequences of the projects by CSOs reveal that the state is not a neutral actor that acts according to what is right when provided full information. Instead, it may intentionally prioritize some interests over another. In the case of the megaprojects of Istanbul, the state has upheld a developmentalist discourse that prioritizes neoliberal developmental interests over environmental interests. Thus, attributing these strategic decisions to “misinformation” could be seen as a result of the high depoliticization of conservationist CSOs.

As oppose to the developmentalist and exclusionary hegemonic discourse of the AKP, the civil society actors have employed environmentalist discourse which has been increasingly seen as perilously counter-hegemonic with the introduction of the megaprojects. Though, one has to be aware of the fact that this counter-hegemonic discourse of environmentalism is, also, tried to be endorsed by the AKP through the construction of alternative public spaces. This means that the AKP government as well has promoted an alternative understanding of environmentalism

¹⁵ Translated from: “Bir yanlış yapılıyorsa bunun sebebi iyi olanın o olduğuna inanmaları, yanlış bilgiler.”

to show that it is, indeed, sensitive to environmental issues and, thus, to counter the challenges posed by the endorsement of counter-hegemonic discourses by the civil society actors. For example, in the groundbreaking ceremony of the Third airport project, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan draws attention to the fact that the airport will generate its electricity and labeled the airport a “green airport” without mentioning the environmentally hazardous aspects of the project. Likewise, the Canal Istanbul project has been introduced by the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in the following words: “This project, most importantly, is an environmental project. It is a project for protecting Istanbul and its adjacencies, nature, the sea, the water resources, the green, and the lives of the animals and the plants” ("Erdoğan Çılgın Projesini," 2011). In line with the arguments of Lewis (2013), who argues that the non-democratic states will try to retain the hegemonic discourse by the creation of alternative public spaces to influence and shape the public discourse. This repetitive emphasis on the environmentalist features of the projects might be seen as attempts to construct alternative public spaces to legitimize itself against the challengers that employ counter-hegemonic discourses.

Since the CSOs are not entities independent of the state structures, in trying to endorse and promote this counter-hegemonic discourse, the strategies of participation and resistance available to them are highly determined by how the state controls and absorb any contestation in a country (Kriesi, 1995; Walzer, 1991). These ties are highly contingent and contextual, hence not conducive to fixed categories such as conservationists or radicals. According to the theoretical framework provided by Young (2002) and Lewis (2013), in non-democratic countries, any attempt to create a public sphere for the discussion and promotion of the counter-hegemonic discourses is highly likely to be repressed by the state through administrative and legislative

rules to limit what can be politicized. When one considers the context of urban environmental governance of Istanbul summarized in Chapter 3, as well as the historical evaluation of state-CSO relations in Turkey explained in Chapter 4, the conservationist CSOs would be expected to limit their function to contribute to the public sphere and counter-hegemonic discursive activities to sustain their self-organization. On the other side, others would be expected to endorse a more political discourse and agenda and try to promote counter-hegemonic public sphere. Though, these chosen strategies of participation and the level of (de)politicization are highly fluid since the CSOs make strategic choices for each and every case separately based on its implications on the CSO's relations with the state and on financial resources.

The case of three largest megaprojects located in the Northern Forests of Istanbul proves to be path-breaking for the conservationist CSOs concerning the concessions and exceptions made about their very cautious attitude towards the endorsement of counter-hegemonic discursive activities, such as public activism, and their high level of depoliticization. Below, report writing and lobbying along with depoliticization are investigated as the strategies available to conservationist CSOs. These strategies are employed selectively by the CSOs in each case. As I give details above in this chapter and Chapter 3, TEMA and WWF-Turkey have written reports harshly criticizing the top-down megaprojects, filed lawsuits, and organized objection petition campaigns against these projects. Thus, this case study reveals the CSOs selectively included in the decision-making processes may also promote counter-hegemonic discourses and encourage informal modes of participation in cases where the formal institutions of participation are proved to be weak and highly ineffective.

5.2.1 Report writing and lobbying

When these three largest megaprojects targeting the Northern Forests are announced, the immediate reactions of both conservationist and radical environmentalist CSOs were starting the processes for the publication of reports. The reason for that was that, through these reports, the CSOs have tried to scientifically prove the possible environmentally hazardous consequences of the projects and convince the authorities to revise or cancel the projects. The reports written by the conservationist environmental CSOs aimed to “present an opinion,”¹⁶ as indicated by the interviewees. After presenting their opinion, the CSOs have asked related authorities about how they would address these problems in the reports.

The conscious choice for using the term “to present an opinion” is important because it denotes to the assumption of the existence of mutual communication and information-sharing while refraining from a portrayal of any conflict. Though, this assumption is very paradoxical when one goes through the decision-making processes of the megaprojects in Istanbul, as elaborated on in this chapter and Chapter 3. An interviewee from a conservationist CSO summarized their motivation in writing the report in the following words:

We had questions. For example, we said if you do this, the ecosystem would be damaged as such and, then, asked how they will deal with these problems. This is our approach. We have officially sent this report to the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Environment. They have presented their thanks and told us they would consider it. (Interview 10)¹⁷

¹⁶ Translated from: “fikir sunmak”

¹⁷ Translated from: “Sorularımız vardı, yani mesela bu yapılırsa ekosistem böyle zarar görecektir, bunları nasıl bertaraf edeceksiniz gibi. Böyle bir yaklaşımımız var. Biz bunu Ulaştırma Bakanlığı ve Çevre Bakanlığına da resmi yazı ile gönderdik. Onlar da teşekkür ettiler, dikkate alacaklarını söylediler.”

This stated approach to the report-writing is highly in line with how Kenis and Lievens (2014) explains the depoliticized discourse of the CSOs since the interviewee argued that the reports written by the conservationist CSOs mainly request technical adjustments without further questioning the core of the problems. Though, when I skim through the reports themselves, I came across with considerable critiques of the developmentalist discourse employed by the AKP in the case of the megaprojects in question. The reports drew attention to the fact that the developmentalist approach, combined with the top-down policy-making processes, causes irrevocable environmental problems in the city. The reports repetitively outlined the deficits in participation and the cruciality of establishing the necessary formal mechanisms to integrate all stakeholders into the decision-making processes.

Two critical reports should be analyzed here in detail. The first is the report named “Either Canal or Istanbul: The Ecologic, Social and Economic Evaluation of Canal Istanbul Project” which is published by WWF-Turkey in 2018. This report is published when the debates over the Canal Istanbul project has reignited after several years of stagnation. The report draws attention to the fact that Istanbul’s expansion towards the Northern parts of the city contradicts all the principles in the 2009 Master Plan concerning the sustainability and ecologic limits of the city. In the report, the hegemonic developmentalist discourse is criticized on the grounds that the aim of driving Istanbul forward among the other megacities in the world is misguided since the megacities are “cities known for their problems rather than their positive features” (WWF, 2018, p. 9). The report further argues that the concerns of short-term economic and political gains can lead to severe miscalculations in the part of the decision-makers (WWF, 2018). As a solution to this short-sightedness, the report suggests that:

The most direct way to eliminate such a problem is to ensure the participation of the stakeholders in the decision-making processes, to enable different views to be heard, and to conduct discussions about the project in the presence of the general public¹⁸. (WWF, 2018, p. 76)

Then, analyzing the decision-making processes of the Canal Istanbul project, the report draws attention to the non-transparent and non-participatory decision-making processes as well as the difficulties and uncertainties in trying to access any information about the project. So, it is explicit, in the report, that the report does not only aim to present an opinion like it is argued by the interviewees. Instead, it considerably criticizes the neoliberal hegemonic discourse of developmentalism and demands greater access to decision-making processes for the actors in civil society.

Similarly, TEMA has published the report named “The Three Projects That Will Affect the Future of Istanbul: Third Bridge, Third Airport, Canal Istanbul”. This report, as well, had a very critical standing towards the megaprojects in question. The report criticizes the sole focus of the government on the economic and functional gains of the projects and argues that the costs of such large-scale projects could be higher than its economic returns (TEMA, 2014). The report repetitively mentions the scientific approach employed in the preparation process of the report. This “scientific approach” that the report draws attention to is discussed thoroughly in this chapter when I analyze the depoliticized discourse and activities of the CSOs. Based on this scientific approach, the report underscores the need for establishing the necessary mechanisms for civil society participation into the process in the following words:

¹⁸ Translated from: “Böylesi bir sorunsalı izale etmenin en doğrudan yolu, karar alma sürecine paydaşların katılımı sağlamak, farklı görüşlerin ses bulmasına imkan sunmak ve projeye ilgili tartışmaları genel kamuoyunun huzurunda icra etmektir.”

These projects are expected to be prepared with a scientific approach within the framework of the principles of planning and protection, in coordination with all relevant institutions and stakeholders, not in the form of top-down central decisions without necessary and adequate research.¹⁹ (TEMA, 2014)

As opposed to the literature on civil society and the historical analysis of state-civil society relations in Turkey, the conservationist CSOs, functioning in a divided-environment and under the constraints of non-democratic state institutions, function as a new platform of participation and a venue for discussion of counter-hegemonic discourses. Through these reports, the conservationist CSOs generate counter-hegemonic discourses even if the content remains depoliticized and more moderate compared to the reports written by radical environmentalist CSOs and EMOs. These reports written by conservationist CSOs were appreciated by the radical environmentalist CSOs and EMOs, as the members of these organizations indicate in their interviews. As oppose to the arguments of Young (2002) and Lewis (2013), the reports show that the room for maneuver is greater than what the theory suggests for the CSOs.

The comprehensive reports written by the conservationist CSOs have successfully fostered the creation of a public sphere for the critical discussion of the developmentalist hegemonic approach (Lust-Okar, 2004; Young, 2002). Thus, this case study confirms the arguments of Paker et al. (2013) on the multi-dimensional patterns of cooperation, cooptation, and conflict between the state and the CSOs. The interviews show that this report-writing process defined by the interviewees as “opinion-sharing” between the state and the civil society had important unexpected

¹⁹ Translated from: “Bu projelerin gerekli ve yeterli arařtırmalar yapılmadan tepeden inme merkezi kararlar řeklinde deęil, ilgili tm kuruluřlar ve paydařlarla eřgdm iinde, planlama ve koruma ilkeleri erevesinde bilimsel bir yaklařımla hazırlanması beklenir.”

consequences for the conservationist environmental CSOs. Even though the reports were officially welcomed by the state, some of the interviewees from conservationist CSOs mentioned how their relationship with the state had been negatively affected by the process, which they refer to as a “resentment period”²⁰ (Interview 7). This process demonstrates well the tensions emerged between the state and civil society when the CSOs mainly focused on their self-organization and their service delivery function attempts to contribute to the public sphere, even with a moderate discourse (Young, 2002). Highlighting this point, Interviewee 7 argued that this resentment period leads to problems in their relations with the state and, thus, in their ongoing projects. Hence, the document research reveals that the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning has made a public announcement after the release of the report. In this announcement, the report written by TEMA is described as unscientific and having political purposes (" Bakanlık’tan TEMA’nın," 2018). So, realizing the adverse effects of this strained relationship with the state on their self-organization function, TEMA had to strive for regenerating the damaged relationship of their organization with the state since they acknowledge that “the works on the environment generally necessitates the cooperation of the state” (Interview 7)²¹.

Here, it is crucial to draw attention to the fact that CSOs also have a set of strategies that targets not directly environmental protection but specifically the enhancement and maintenance of the relationship with the state, which is believed to serve environmental protection indirectly. An interviewee stated that this set of

²⁰ Translated from: “Küskünlük süreci”

²¹ Translated from: “Doğa konusundaki çalışmalar genelde kamuyla ortak bir şey yapmak zorunda olduğunuz çalışmalar.

strategies ensures that “you may be cautioning, but you will not be accusing”²² (Interviewee 7). This set of strategies is investigated under the subtitle of depoliticization, which enables conservationist CSOs to keep more moderate relations with the state to be able to sustain their ability to participate in a “divided environment” (Lust-Okar, 2004). Although the conservationist CSOs could endorse and support counter-hegemonic discourses on occasions, their specific place in the divided environment urges them to employ various sets of strategies that should accompany the counter-hegemonic discursive activities.

5.2.2 Depoliticization

While the conservationist CSOs are sometimes able to endorse counter-hegemonic discursive activities, they should also maintain their depoliticization to accompany this counter-hegemonic discourse in order to maintain their self-organization. CSOs’ interaction with and dependence to the state institutions continuously shape and reshape what can be politicized and what cannot and, therefore, the level of politicization of a CSO is almost directly a function of the CSOs’ choice of the mode of interaction with the state, as delineated in Chapter 2 (Kadibeyoğlu et al., 2017; Kenis & Lievens, 2014; Swyngedouw, 2014). It is these fluid ties with the state that ultimately shaped the strategies of the CSOs. The CSOs navigate their strategies and discourses according to the state’s attitude towards the civil society participation and, also, according to their financial concerns, as well. In such a context, established categories such as conservationist or radical environmentalist fails to explain different cases since both CSOs and the state position themselves differently in each

²² Translated from: “Uyarıcı olabilirsiniz ama suçlayıcı olmayacaksınız.”

case. The relationship between the state and CSOs is multidimensional and in countries where the political institutionalization is low, such as in Turkey, the boundaries of those included and excluded from the participation processes are highly fluid.

The interviewees from conservationist CSOs argued that environmental issues create unique opportunities for more participatory models of governance by drawing attention to “the issues’ non-political nature.” An interviewee explained this non-political nature by saying “For example, today, if you work on human rights, it may have a political aspect. But this is not the case in environmental issues. (...) So, environmental issues can be more effectively participatory”²³ (Interview 7). Kenis and Lievens (2014) explain the depoliticization of CSOs with reference to the disguise of the hegemonic power relations and the ensuing antagonism. So, assuming that the environmental issues can foster greater chances for participation can indicate a high level of depoliticization considering the contentious dynamics of the above-mentioned decision-making processes of the megaprojects. Between 2009 and 2019, instead of serving as a non-political sphere that makes effective civil society participation possible, environmental issues have become a sphere of political discussion and contestation between the state and the civil society. The reason for this is that while the AKP government has tried to legitimize the megaproject with the endorsement of the neoliberal developmentalist and exclusionary discourse, the environmentalist civil society has turned into an ultimate platform for the generation and promotion of a counter-hegemonic environmentalist discourse. So, this was a

²³ Translated from: “Mesela, bugün siz insan hakları konusunda çalışıyor alsanız bunun bir siyasi olabiliyor. Ama çevre konusunda bu böyle değil (...) Dolayısıyla çevre konusunda katılımcılık anlamında daha başarılı olunabilir.”

two ways street. Firstly, how the government sought legitimization for its projects have changed from 2009 to 2019. And, secondly, the role and strategic choices of civil society has changed depending on the changing context and increasing democratic and institutional crises.

All interviewees working in the conservationist CSOs emphasized the “political neutrality” as the key to their success. This political neutrality is mainly characterized by being equidistant from all political ideologies and parties, which is expected to ensure good relations with the state regardless of the changes in the distribution of power. When referring to the importance of a high level of depoliticization, an interviewee disclosed how it serves to the preservation of the organization in the following words “Our organization is not an activist one. (...) when you defend life, nobody will do anything to you as long as you keep your political neutrality and scientificness.” (Interview 7)²⁴. To uphold this political neutrality, the conservationist CSOs do not accept people with official membership to political parties in the organization.

Moreover, as explained below, the prior importance attached to the political neutrality has shaped the patterns of cooperation between the civil society actors and, thus, affects maintains the divided environment and diminishes the capacities of the civil society (Doyle, 2017; Kadirbeyoğlu et al., 2017; Lust-Okar, 2004). The divided environment is maintained through depoliticization, generally in two ways. Firstly, the levels of (de)politicization determine who would be included and, consequently, who would be excluded from the formal mechanism of participation. Though, in the

²⁴ Translated from: “Bizim vakfımızın yapısı aktivist bir yapı değil. (...) yaşamı savunduğunuz an siyasi tarafsızlığınız ve bilimselliğiniz devam ederse kimse size bir şey yapmaz”

case of the three megaprojects in question, this research reveals that the odds for participation are considerably low for both conservationist and radical environmentalist CSOs. Nevertheless, still, the conservationist CSOs try to keep their level of depoliticization high to sustain their self-organization and continue their activities in other areas. Secondly, the level of (de)politicization also affects the cooperation patterns between the CSOs. This fact is observed widely in our case, considering the discourses and actions employed by CSOs. The interviewees from both the conservationist and the radical environmentalist CSOs mentioned how they selectively cooperate based on their “level of politicization.” High level of depoliticization hurts cooperation as such: radical environmentalist CSOs and EMOs got skeptical about the dedication of the conservationist CSOs to the environmentalist causes and conservationist CSOs do not want to lose their “political neutrality” and try to stay away from organizations with a more political counter-hegemonic discourse.

Most interviewees from conservationist CSOs touched upon a common pattern that “if a CSO is labeled as radical, surely most of the mainstream CSOs will refrain from being seen together with them”²⁵ (Interview 5). When asked how a CSO can be labeled radical, an interviewee from a conservationist CSO said, “We pay attention to this, if there is no political neutrality and if there is an image of an extension of politics, we do not come together with them. Because this may overshadow our political neutrality.”²⁶ (Interview 7). The course of events in the

²⁵ Translated from: “Bir STK işte radikal olarak mimlenirse, etiketlenirse tabii ki de anaakım STKların çoğu o gruplarla, STK ile bir arada görünmemeye dikkat ediyorlar.”

²⁶ Translated from: “Bunda şuna dikkat ediyoruz yani eğer siyasi tarafsızlık yoksa, bir siyasiyetin uzantısı görüntüsü varsa onlarla biraraya gelmiyoruz. Çünkü bizim orada olmamız siyasi tarafsızlığımızın üzerine gölge düşürür.”

decision-making and implementation processes of three megaprojects in question proves that the level of politicization is, indeed, an essential determinant of cooperation among the CSOs. The first among the three projects, the Third Bridge and North Marmara Highway projects, has been swiftly criticized by both conservationist and radical environmentalist CSOs. Though, in accordance with what is argued in the literature and what the interviewees told during the interviews, the protests have been held separately by these two groups. TMMOB and several CSOs that are labeled to be political have gathered around a platform named “Life Instead of the Third Bridge Platform” and organized public protests (“3. Köprüye 'Hayır',” 2010). This platform has filed a criminal complaint against the then-mayor Kadir Topbaş, then Minister of Transport Binali Yıldırım, then Prime Minister Erdogan and several other ministers about the abuse of duty, illegal action and causing a loss to the public (“3. Köprü Yerine Yaşam Platformu'ndan,” 2012). On the other hand, conservationist CSOs, such as TEMA, WWF-Turkey, and Doğa Association, have made a joint statement against the project (“Biz karşıyız,” 2009). These CSOs have also separately filed suits, which will be elaborated below in this chapter.

Though, besides certain deficiencies in cooperation, the case of the three largest megaprojects located in the Northern Forests of Istanbul has also created unique opportunities for cooperation. As delineated above, Boulding (2014) argues that the type of participation that the CSOs encourage depends on the political and institutional context of a country. Moreover, he diagnoses that they could encourage informal forms of participation either because they have observed inextricable problems of inefficiency or because they unintentionally increase the associative activity (Boulding, 2014). Especially after the “EIA Positive” report for the Canal Istanbul project was presented to the public, the objection process to the report and

the project is proved to lead distinct cooperation among the actors in environmental civil society. All of the CSOs, including TMMOB, Istanbul Bar Association, Greenpeace, WWF, TEMA, and EMOs, including KOS, KİS, and Extinction Rebellion-Turkey, have first called all citizens to object the project within the assigned 10 days of objection.

After the objections have proved to be ineffective, they have, secondly, call the public to file suit against the change in the 2009 Master Plan that legitimizes the Canal Istanbul project. The CSOs and EMOs have published examples of objection petitions on their websites and from various social media platforms. All petitions were different from each other and no united action has been announced. Though, what has happened *de facto* was the large-scale cooperation among the CSOs and EMOs over the endorsement and support of counter-hegemonic discourse of environmentalism and the observed necessity to employ public sphere discursive activities. Furthermore, a new platform, called “Either Canal or Istanbul Coordination,”²⁷ was established with the support of radical environmentalist CSOs and EMOs. This platform has used the title of the well-known report of WWF-Turkey on the Canal Istanbul project as a name, which signifies easing of the critical position of EMOs towards the conservationist CSOs.

In line with this observation, several interviewees from EMOs have stated that their skeptical attitude towards the conservationist CSOs has changed, especially after they saw the reports critical to the megaprojects written by these organizations. Hence an interviewee from an EMO stated that “until recently, I was very critical

²⁷ Translated from: “Ya Kanal Ya İstanbul Koordinasyonu”

towards these organizations. I am still a bit critical, but I keep the report written by WWF at my bedside. It is really comprehensive and good-written.” (Interviewee 11)²⁸. This increased trust and cooperation among the CSOs could be traced back to the conservationist CSO’s greater employment of counter-hegemonic discourses and limited public sphere activism. The so-called conservationist CSOs they had endorsed more counter-hegemonic discursive activities when the formal participation mechanism proved to be ineffective and the expected environmental damage of the projects was foreseen to be non-negligible. Hence, the so-called conservationist CSOs have become much more critical and adopted more counter hegemonic discourses during this decade as they are excluded from the decision-making processes. This mutation of strategic choices is important since it signifies the fluidity of these boundaries and categories and, also, the ultimate ineffectiveness of civil society in the context of weak formal institutions.

The level of (de)politicization affects discursive choices of the CSOs considerably. Doyle (2017) and Kadirbeyoğlu et al. (2017) mention the moderating effect of the interaction of CSOs with the state. Concerning the moderating effect of state interaction on CSOs an interviewee from a conservationist CSO stated that:

There is such a situation: the CSOs that deals with the issues out of the issues of their expertise are sometimes intimidated if what they say does not serve the state or the government. To avoid this, the CSOs sometimes can moderate their discourse and give up saying the things they would say otherwise in order to ensure cooperation with the state. This is a choice.²⁹ (Interview 5)

²⁸ Translated from: “Yakın zamana kadar, bu organizasyonlara karşı çok eleştireldim. Yine de biraz eleştirelim, ama WWF tarafından yazılan raporu başucumda tutuyorum. Gerçekten kapsamlı ve iyi yazılmış bir rapor.”

²⁹ Translated from: “Genel olarak baktığımızda şöyle bir durum var uzmanlık alanından çalışma konusunda bağımsız söz söyleyen STKların söyledikleri devletin veya hükümetin işine gelmeyince o

The interviewee further gave an example from the occasion when the CSO he/she is working for has attempted to work on Hydroelectric Power Plant (HEPP) issue, one of the contentious issues in Turkey that led to public resistance in the project sites, and they had to quit after the ministry has warned the CSO informally about the fact that “the government does not allow any activity related to HEPP issue”³⁰ (Interview 5). In line with the literature on environmental governance in Turkey described in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, this shows that the Turkish state tries to control and absorb the contestation through informal procedures like the state-dictated case-selection and the “resentment periods” as mentioned above in this chapter. These procedures, along with the administrative and legislative mechanisms of control, moderated the challenges posed by the CSOs to the hegemonic discourse. This moderation could be observed in the working areas of the CSOs and their demands and strategies.

Unlike the EMOs with outstanding urban roots and motivations, all of the interviewees from conservationist CSOs have noted that the project sites of the CSOs they are working for are generally “more natural areas” and, thus, they do not focus on the urban environmental problems. Considering that these CSOs are the major and most influential environmental CSOs in Turkey, it becomes clear that the urban environment is particularly open to the threats of neoliberal urbanization and development. The reason for these CSOs not to see the urban areas as their project sites could be evaluated, again, with the quest for a high level of depoliticization. As mentioned in Chapter 3, undergoing an aggressive process of neoliberal urbanization and development, Istanbul has been the political and economic power base of the

zaman düşmanlaştırılıyor. Bundan kaçınmak için bu sefer STKlar da söylemlerini yumuşatmaya, devlet ile işbirlikleri için söyleyecekleri şeyleri söylememeye falan başlayabiliyorlar. Bu bir seçim.”

³⁰ Translated from: “Hükümet HES ile ilgili hiçbir çalışmaya izin vermiyor”.

AKP government and experienced an unprecedented process of land commodification. Thus, in such an environment, it was tough for the environmentalist CSOs to try to participate in the governance mechanism without functioning as a platform promoting the counter-hegemonic environmentalist discourses.

Nevertheless, still, all of these CSOs also have at least one official document about the megaprojects in Istanbul. They explained this with reference to the possibly great extent of the destruction these projects will cause to the environment by saying, “We are not normally very active at the level of cities. Though, since we have thought that the Canal Istanbul project could generate great environmental damage, we decided to present our opinion”³¹ (Interview 10). This, again, shows that the megaprojects in question created unique conditions that required the conservationist CSOs that generally refrain intervening more contentious urban environmental issues to employ discursive activities in the urban sphere.

All in all, when asked the outcome of these strategies, an interviewee from a conservationist CSO expressed the observed inefficiency as such:

Our job is to inform. But, concerning these three projects, informing was not enough. It does not matter whether you inform when the information does not reach the place it should. (...) Though, it is also open to question whether other types of reactions could completely prevent them.³² (Interview 10)

³¹ Translated from: “Biz normalde şehirlerde çok etkin değiliz. Ama Kanal İstanbul projesinin sebep olabileceği büyük çevresel yıkımı düşününce bu konuda fikrimizi belirtmemiz gerektiğini düşündük.”

³² Translated from: “Bizim görevimiz bilgilendirmek. Ama mesela üç projeyle ilgili bu bilgilendirme yeterli olmadı. Bilgi yerine ulaşmayınca siz anlatsanız da önemi yok. (...) Öbür türlü tepkiler de tam anlamıyla engelliyor mu o da tartışılır.”

These “other types of reactions” evidently refers to the resistance strategies of radical environmentalist CSOs and EMOs. Unlike conservationist CSOs, radical environmentalist CSOs and informal EMOs are more political and less moderate in their discourses and endorse public sphere activism and direct action to function as a platform of participation through creating public spheres for the discussion and promotion of the counter-hegemonic discourses (Lewis, 2013). Although their sociopolitical roles, as well, highly depend on the state structures, the sets of strategies available to them, are different because of their place in the divided environment.

5.3 Strategies of participation and resistance: radical environmentalist CSOs

The radical environmentalist CSOs differ from the conservationist CSOs with respect to their chosen strategies of participation and resistance in the case of three megaprojects in question. This could be explained based on their specific position in the divided environment. According to the concept of divided environment, as described by Lust-Okar (2004) and Doyle (2017), it would be expected to diminish moderates’ will to mobilize and radically challenge the status quo, which, respectively, increases the cost of mobilization for the radicals. Though, above, I have elaborated on how the moderates, i.e., conservationist CSOs, would sometimes be willing to endorse and support counter-hegemonic discourses in cases where the authorities try to legitimize their policies/projects not through civil society participation but through exclusionary hegemonic discourse. In such a case, the moderates, as well, could be willing to employ counter-hegemonic discursive activities as the prospects for even selective inclusion diminishes considerably. When the moderates’ will to mobilize increases, we would expect the cost of

radicals' mobilization would decrease accordingly. Though, below it is explained that the case of three megaprojects located in the Northern Forests of Istanbul has created new challenges and costs on the employment of the well-known strategies of radical environmentalist CSOs, i.e., using legal participation mechanism and public sphere activism. Hence even the most state friendly CSO can become critical and counter-hegemonic over time making these distinctions between moderates and radicals extremely fluid and dynamic.

Both the self-organization function and the public sphere contribution function, as defined by Young (2002), of the civil society is more explicit in the radical environmentalist CSOs compared to the conservationist ones. Firstly, they serve as an entity of self-organization for those who are more overtly excluded from the decision-making processes in a divided environment (Lust-Okar, 2004). And, secondly, they try to combine this self-organization function with the function of contribution to the public sphere and generate a counter-hegemonic discourse with the acknowledgment of the political nature of the urban environmental problems (Lewis, 2013; Young, 2002)

The radical environmentalist CSOs acknowledge the political nature of the urban environmental question and, thus, are generally more willing to contribute to the public sphere through counter-hegemonic discursive activities. Contrary to the so-called conservationist CSOs, the so-called radical environmentalist CSOs were more content with positioning themselves in clear opposition to the AKP government considering the principles and modes of the urban and environmental governance. Moreover, unlike TEMA and WWF-Turkey, they have welcomed people with official membership to different political parties. Many of the interviewees from

radical environmentalist CSOs argue that the environmentalist organizations should be political and opponent because they have specific policy choices over others. This standing is well demonstrated by an interviewee in the following words:

So, there is no such thing as not being political. Our organization is a political one. I cannot say it is not. After all, you should have some preferred policies when trying to define and defend the public good. (...) If you ask whether we are opponent. We should be opponent if we encounter activities that are against the public good; otherwise, we would contradict ourselves. So, within this framework, yes, we are opponent, and we have to be political.³³
(Interview 13)

This approach towards the sociopolitical roles of the CSOs is very different from the one introduced by the conservationist CSOs as explained above. Contrary to the conservationist CSOs, the radical environmentalist CSOs do not mention the CSOs' role to inform the policy-makers to orient them in a top-down policy-making process. Instead, their conceptualization of CSOs' roles was more concerned with the strengthening of the bottom-up governance mechanism. These two different conceptualizations of the sociopolitical roles of the CSOs tell a lot about the two different sets of strategies of participation these organizations have.

All interviewees from radical environmentalist CSOs mentioned Gezi events when they evaluate the historical integration of urban and environmental questions into the daily political debates and struggles in Turkey and underscored how the experiences of the organizations they have worked have changed since then.

Likewise, the documents and speeches of the political leaders about the megaprojects

³³ Translated from: "Yani politik olmamak diye bir şey yok aslında. Biz politigiz, değiliz diyemem. Zaten bu kamusal yarar dediğiniz şeyi belirlerken ve savunurken de tercih ettiğiniz politikalar olması lazım. (...) Dolayısıyla muhalif miyiz? Kamu yararına aykırı bir faaliyetle karşılaşırsak muhalefet etmek zorundayız yoksa kendimizle çelişiriz. Dolayısıyla bu çerçevede evet muhalifsek muhalifiz, politik de olmak zorundayız."

in question repetitively mention the Gezi events. As explained in Chapter 3, in detail, the Gezi events were evaluated by many as the eruption of widespread popular discontent towards the large-scale drastic restructuring of Istanbul (Özen, 2015). This study reveals that the Gezi events have become a critical juncture for the politicization of urban environmental questions and the transformation of environmental CSOs' experiences. As the urban environmental question has been integrated more and more into daily political discussion and struggles, the environmentalist CSOs has become the potential agents for the generation of counter-hegemonic discourses. The President of Turkey and the Head of the AKP, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has repetitively referred the Gezi Park protests as the manifestation of a great game played against Turkey and, then, framed the objections and protests against the megaprojects as the extension of this great game ("Başbakan Erdoğan: Gezi zekalılar," 2014).

An interviewee from a radical environmentalist CSO described Gezi events' effect on the socio-political image of the CSOs as such "Environmental organizations like us and the movements were political before Gezi events; it is now political, as well. Though, their visibility and their attachment to daily politics have surely increased after Gezi events."³⁴ (Interview 10). This greater integration of the urban environmental question into daily politics has increased the limitations on civil society participation in various ways and created unique challenges for the civil society actors. An interviewee described how the limitation on their public sphere activities has increased after Gezi events in the following words:

³⁴ Translated from: "Bu kurumlar ve hareketler Geziden önce de politikti, yine öyle. Ama bunların görünürlükleri ve güncel politika ile ilişkileneceği kesinlikle Geziden sonra arttı tabii ki."

The public space is now closed to us as much as possible. For example, we would like to bring our technical, legal, and activist works about the Third Bridge and Third Airport projects to the public sphere and would like to allow the public to decide. But such a process is unfortunately close to us.³⁵ (Interview 13)

Thus, below, the strategies of participation and resistance available to radical environmentalist CSOs, i.e., legal participation mechanism, public sphere activism and cooperation with EMOs, is investigated with a particular focus on the effects of this increasing integration into daily politics on the modes and limits of civil society participation.

5.3.1 Legal participation mechanisms

The radical environmentalist CSOs' one of the most mentioned strategies is using the legal mechanism of participation and objection. "Bringing a lawsuit" is a much less preferable strategy of resistance for the conservationist CSOs compared to the radical environmentalist CSOs because it may have the potential to damage the organizations' relatively good relations with the state. Though, in the case of the three megaprojects in question, the conservationist CSOs, as well, has appealed to legal mechanisms. This was because *a priori* participation was not possible, also, for the conservationist, CSOs and the *post facto* participation strategies like report-writing and lobbying have proved to be not enough to change the policy choices of the AKP government. This, again, reveals that the experiences of radical environmentalist CSOs and conservationist CSOs have increasingly become similar and divided environment has gradually wiped out to the detriment of any form of

³⁵ Translated from: "Kamusal alan bize artık mümkün olduğu kadar kapalı. Biz isterdik mesela özellikle bu 3.köprü ve 3.havalimanı ile ilgili yaptığımız teknik, hukuksal ve eylemsel bütün çalışmaların kamuoyu önünde yaşanmasını ve kamuoyunun karar vermesini isterdik. Ama böyle bir süreç maalesef bize de kapalı."

formal civil society participation. Though, the conservationist CSOs have used this strategy more cautiously through depoliticization. An interviewee from a conservationist CSO mentioned to the occasions where they bring suits against these megaprojects by highlighting the fact that “This does not mean that we are against them (the government); instead, it means that we are in favor of nature”³⁶ (Interview 7). This quotation shows the interviewee’s attempt to balance the use of legal participation mechanisms with the arguments denoting to the high level of depoliticization of the organization.

The uncertainties in the processes of civil society participation through legal mechanisms has increased considerably between 2009 and 2019. Firstly, the procrastination of the trial processes has increased uncertainty and generated widespread discontent among civil society actors. Secondly, legal achievements have increasingly suffered from low implementation problems. As explained in Chapter 3 in detail, any plan for the construction of a third bridge that would expand the city towards the north was strictly objected in the 1 / 100.000 scaled 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul. An amendment made to the plan after the announcement of the route of the Third Bridge project. The addition of a note to the part named Plan Implementing Provisions in the 2009 Master Plan enabled the transitions from Bosphorus to be realized with sub-scale plans, even if the Master Plan itself still definitely forbids the construction of a third bridge in the Northern parts of the city. This amendment has been approved by IBB on 16 June 2010 and the 1/25.000 scaled Istanbul Province North Marmara Highway Master Plan has been approved the next day on 17 June

³⁶ Translated from: “Bu onlara karşı olduğumuz anlamına gelmiyor, doğadan yana olduğumuz anlamına geliyor”

2010 by IBB. This sub-scale plan has legalized the already announced projects. In the first place, the CSOs have objected to the revisions with objection petitions within the indicated duration. Though, the objection petitions proved to be ineffective after the revisions are officially approved.

Legal participation mechanisms have served to the constitution of a public space that enabled discussion over the hegemonic developmentalist discourse and its counter-hegemonic environmentalist counterpart. The lawsuits opened by the CSOs generated a lively discussion in the public sphere about the legality and legitimacy of the megaprojects. This could be seen as the major achievement of the legal participation mechanisms since the cases, even if concluded on behalf of the complainant CSOs, have little or no effect on the trajectory of the projects. TMMOB and TEMA, along with several other CSOs, separately filed suits against the change in the 2009 Master Plan and the sub-scale Istanbul Province North Marmara Highway Plan that aims to legalize the Third Bridge and North Marmara Highway projects. The expert report written by the independent experts for informing the court has concluded that the absence of the bridge and connection roads in the 2009 Master Plan make their existence problematic, considering there is no consistency and integrity between the Master plan and the sub-scale plans ("Bilirkişiden 3'üncü Köprü," 2016). Even though the expert report also justifies the CSOs' complaints, most of these cases opened by civil society actors are lost (TEMA, 2013). The other cases concluded on behalf of the CSOs are examined below when I discuss the problems in implementation.

Likewise, there were many discussions over the legal basis of the Third Airport project as well. The Third Airport project has been integrated into the 2009

Master Plan after its foundations were laid on June 7, 2014. Even before the end of the 10-day EIA objection and suggestion period, the tender of the Third Airport project was conducted on May 3, 2013. TMMOB has opened a lawsuit for the annulment of the tender by drawing attention to the fact that the tender is illegal because the EIA process is not yet concluded. TMMOB has also opened other cases concerning the problems in the EIA processes, annulment of the administrative contract, annulment of the reserve area announcement, and urgent expropriation decisions in the project area ("3. Havalimanı Yargıya Taşındı," 2014). Most of these cases were not concluded for a long time, which is evaluated by many as an attempt to procrastinate the trial processes (TMMOB Çevre Mühendisleri Odası, 2014). Similar evaluations have been made, also, by the EMOs. For example, KOS, which is an EMO that also has a separate formal association, has won a case against the EIA exemption of a stone pit area that is intended to provide backfill material for the Third Airport project after two years-long trial process. In a public announcement, KOS stated that "according to the law, these cases, which will be subject to the urgent trial procedure, must be concluded within two-three months at most, while this lawsuit has been concluded within two years." ("Danıştay 3. Havalimanı," 2018).

The procrastination process can be understood within the framework provided by Young (2002) and Lewis (2013) as the state's attempt to contain any challenges to the hegemonic discourse, as explained in Chapter 2. They refer to the use of administrative and legislative rules to contain the civil society actors' attempts to generate and promote a counter-hegemonic discourse. This case study reveals that the manipulation of the legal processes can, also, be another control mechanism for the non-democratic states. The procrastination of the legal processes has served the state to contain the challengers to the hegemonic developmentalist discourse by

keeping them hopeful for a legal gain against the projects. In the meantime, though, the projects have continued without any interruption.

Furthermore, the legal mechanisms through which the civil society actors can seek participation have severely suffered from low implementation problems. Interviewees from the radical environmentalist CSOs and EMOs have drawn attention to the fact that “bypassing the law”³⁷ is possible in various ways. The interviewees mentioned two different processes through which the effectiveness of legal participation mechanisms is considerably diminished. Through these two processes the uncertainties in the legal participation mechanisms have increased for the civil society actors in urban environmental governance. The first process is summarized by an interviewee in the following words:

Recently, many decisions were taken to stop the execution in various places. This is a very nice thing, but the bad thing is that the court decides to stop the execution and, the next day, the same project is introduced again as a new project again after making a small change in the project. We have this problem in many lawsuits related to environmental issues. That was what happened in the Third Airport project. We objected to the EIA report and, then, they apply again with a new EIA after making changes in the project. What will happen then? Your case will be dropped.³⁸
(Interview 13)

This vicious cycle of new projects deprives the radical environmentalist CSOs of their one of the vital tools of formal participation and demonstrates well how the legal tools are manipulated to limit the discursive activities of CSOs (Lewis, 2013).

³⁷ Translated from: “Kanunun etrafından dolanmak”

³⁸ Translated from: “Son dönemde birçok yerle ilgili yürütmeyi durdurma kararı alındı. Bu çok güzel bir şey ama kötü olan şu bakıyorsunuz mahkeme yürütmeyi durdurma kararı alıyor aynı projede bir sonraki gün küçük bir değişiklik yaparak yeni proje olarak tekrar sunuluyor. Birçok çevre davasında bu sıkıntıyı yaşıyoruz.”

The second process that hinders any attempt of formal participation through the legal system is the implementation problems of the decisions to stop the execution. An interviewee delineated this problem by saying:

The court has decided to stop the execution, but no one listened, they continued to work at the same speed. You make a criminal complaint about this, the prosecution does not process or ask the relevant institution to process, i.e., the municipality or the governor's office, but no one can go and stop the execution.³⁹
(Interview 6)

One of the examples of such a process is the case concluded on behalf of TMMOB regarding the Third Bridge connection roads. After the case is concluded and found it illegal to enforce the plan amendments with the approval of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization instead of IBB, TMMOB has made a public announcement and argued that all the construction should be stopped immediately. They argued that the cancellation decision about the main corridors that connect the bridge legs with the North Marmara Highway on both sides damages the project integrity and, thus, requires the full revision or cancellation of the project ("İptal Kararı 3. Köprü", 2015). On the other hand, the General Directorate of Highways has announced that the cancellation decision has no effect on the rest of the project and restricted to a small area ("İptal Kararı Projeyi Etkilemeyecek," 2015). Even though the radical environmentalist CSOs and EMOs made public protests and demonstrations for the halting of the project, the project has continued and the completed on 26 August 2016.

³⁹ Translated from: "Mahkeme yürütmeyi durdurma kararı vermiş ama takan yok, onlar aynı hızla işine devam ediyor. Bununla ilgili suç duyurusunda bulunuyorsunuz, savcılık işlem yapmıyor ya da yapması için ilgili kuruma, belediye veya valilik, talimat veriyor kimse gidip durduramıyor."

The legal participation mechanisms are the last resort for the CSOs who could not achieve a priori participation and could not affect the policy choices by way of report-writing and lobbying. Thus, many interviewees mentioned how low implementation problems in the legal participation processes had encouraged public sphere activism. An interviewee drew attention to the despair that the CSOs experience as such “what can you do more than a criminal complaint to the prosecution? Here, as the last exit, we go to the public, to the press, to action, to the street...”⁴⁰ (Interview 10). Similarly, drawing attention to the political and economic significance of these megaprojects for the AKP, as explained in Chapter 3, another interviewee argued that “There are certain critical projects that cannot be stopped even if there is a legal gain, even if there is a decision to stop the execution. These projects cannot be stopped without the actual resistance of the people”⁴¹ (Interview 12). I think this explains a lot about the emergence and rise of the EMOs in Istanbul and their outstanding role in resisting the megaprojects and the hegemonic developmentalist discourse. All in all, in the case of the megaprojects in question, the weaknesses in the legal institutions have become an effective tool for controlling the counter-hegemonic discourse and absorbing the attempts of civil society participation through legal participation mechanisms.

5.3.2 Public activism and cooperation with EMOs

As argued by Young (2002) and Lewis (2013), one of the two central characteristics of CSOs is their contribution to the public sphere through counter-hegemonic

⁴⁰ Translated from: “Savcılığa suç duyurusundan daha büyük ne yapabilirsiniz mesela? İşte, son çıkış olarak da kamuoyuna, basına, eyleme, sokağa...”

⁴¹ Translated from: “Ama belli kritik projeler de oluyor ki hukuksal kazanımı olsa bile, durdurma kararı olsa bile durdurulamıyor. Bu projeler halkın fiili direnişi olmadan durdurulamıyor”

discourse. They argue that the CSOs operating in non-democratic countries cannot effectively contribute to the public sphere since the state would try to limit the counter-hegemonic discursive activities, and the CSOs would try to maintain their self-organization. In such a framework, it is crucial to examine the dynamics of public sphere activism, i.e., public protests and demonstrations, endorsed by radical environmentalist CSOs and, on occasions, by conservationist CSOs.

The use of public activism as a strategy of political participation is not a choice but, instead, a necessity out of the blockage of various mechanisms of both *a priori* and *post facto* participation. The public protests and demonstrations of the radical environmentalist CSOs aim “to increase public awareness and public pressure,” as indicated by the interviewees, and are conducted after the necessary official approval processes. Many of the interviewees mentioned the difficulties in approval processes and the bureaucratic burden associated with it. An interviewee summarized this process in the following words:

We start the process two or three weeks before. We have to report all the things we will do that day, including the slogans, banners, etc. These all undergo an investigation, and, after that, they can forbid the use of some words. They continuously find something to problematize. (...) This, in fact, aims to urge you to give up. Most of the time, even if they cannot find anything, they are more inclined not to allow on the basis that there could be a provocation.⁴² (Interview 7)

These burdensome processes lead to the prioritization of more symbolic demonstration and the employment of more moderate discourse in the

⁴² Translated from: “Gidiyoruz işte iki hafta, üç hafta önceden başlatıyoruz süreci. O gün protestoda bütün ne yapacaklarını, sloganlarını, hazırladıkları pankartları önceden sunmamız gerekiyor. O sloganların hepsi incelemenden geçiyor, incelemenden geçtikten sonra bazı kelimeleri yasaklıyorlar. Devamlı takılacak bir şey buluyorlar. (...) Bir de zaten o bürokrasi içinde seni aslında oyalayıp vazgeçirmeye yönelik. Çoğunda da işte hiçbir şey bulamamışlar bile genel provokasyon olur, şu olur, bu olur diyerek izin vermemeye meyilliler.”

demonstrations than would be employed otherwise. In Chapter 6, I have discussed how these burdensome bureaucratic processes, as well as the depoliticization associated with them, have motivated the EMOs to conduct unauthorized public activism. The members of the EMOs argued that the quest for formality had created inefficiency in CSOs' attempts to participate in the non-participatory decision-making processes of the megaprojects. The details of these arguments will be discussed in the next chapter. It is essential to consider that the CSOs' embeddedness into the state structures enables the state to effectively control the public sphere activities of CSOs through bureaucratic processes and administrative rules.

Repetitively heard about the bureaucratic burden associated with formal public sphere activism during the interviews, I made document research to examine the content of the protests and demonstrations related to the megaprojects in question. Hence, I realized that the conservationist CSOs, such as TEMA and WWF-Turkey, has conducted a public demonstration against the first megaproject, i.e., the Third Bridge, but did not officially take part in any protest or demonstration about the Third Airport and Canal Istanbul projects ("Denizde 3. Köprü Protestosu," 2010). On the other hand, radical environmentalist CSOs seems to have increasingly taken joint actions with the EMOs. Platforms have served to coordinate better this increasing cooperation among the radical environmentalist CSOs and EMOs. Life Instead of Third Bridge Platform⁴³ and Either Canal or Istanbul Platform⁴⁴ are examples of such platforms that reveal close CSO-EMO cooperation during the time of our investigation.

⁴³ Translated from: "3.Köprü Yerine Yaşam Platformu"

⁴⁴ Translated from: "Ya Kanal Ya İstanbul Platformu"

One of the reasons why the so-called conservationist CSOs refrain from public activism and the so-called radical environmentalist CSOs increasingly collaborate with EMOs is the increasing costs of public activism for the civil society actors between 2009 and 2019. An interviewee has expressed how a radical environmentalist CSO had experienced a significant breakdown after the funds they have taken from the state have been suddenly cut because of the counter-hegemonic public activism of an executive. The interviewee explains this by referring to the high dependence of the CSOs on the state structures in the following words:

A CSO or any other civil group should consider all possible advantages and disadvantages before starting activism. CSOs, here in Turkey, do this. I do not tell this to legitimize, but if you cooperate with the state and take funding and, simultaneously, try to perform as a radical opposition, the political culture of this government is not the one to approve this.⁴⁵ (Interview 5)

In line with this argument, another interviewee delineated how the resources of TMMOB have decreased after the Gezi park events because they provided shelter and food for the people affected by the tear gas during the protests. Since TMMOB is a CSO that has been established by a state decree and was mainly funded by the supervision protocols made with the state institutions and organizations, they were even more dependent on the state structures.

TMMOB has experienced severe financial hardship after it has officially announced its support for the Gezi events and participated in the protests since the very beginning of the events (TMMOB, 2013). In June 2017, the Ministry of

⁴⁵ Translated from: “Yani bir STKnın, ya da herhangi bir sivil grubun bir eylemliliğe girişmeden önce bunun olası bütün getiri ve götürülerini hesaplayıp düşünüp buna göre davranması gerekir. STKlar da aslında bunu yapıyorlar. Meşrulaştırmak için söylemiyorum ama bir yandan devletle işbirliği yapıyor, finansal destek alıyorsanız bir yandan da katı bir muhalefet yürütecekseniz buradaki iktidarın siyasi kültürü buna tamam diyecek bir kültür değil.”

Environment and Urban Affairs sent a draft amendment to TMMOB law (no. 6235) to the ministries. This draft aimed to deprive the organization of the financial resources collected from the membership dues and supervising services. Hence, the newspapers that are close to the government have announced this draft amendment as a counter-attack to “TMMOB who opposed to all projects launched in line with the 2023 target” (“Dev Projelere Karşı”, 2017). An interviewee from TMMOB summarized this process as such “In this way, steps were taken to put TMMOB in financial trouble. Because TMMOB's main sources of income are, firstly, dues and, then, supervising and inspection services. With these steps, we were exposed to the efforts to cut our revenues”⁴⁶ (Interview 13). Thus, it is clear that the increasing dependence of the CSOs on the state structures creates unique vulnerabilities for the CSOs and increases the cost of public activism.

The cost of public activism, also, increased since the public support remained very limited in the case of civil society’s attempts to resist the neoliberal developmentalist discourse and megaprojects. Hence, many interviewees draw attention to the fact that “Few specific people participate in all the activities. You can understand this very easily. For example, if you participate in a seminar or a protest, most probably you will see that everybody there would know each other.”⁴⁷ (Interview 8) In Chapter 6, I have discussed this problem of low public support in detail when I discuss the experiences of EMOs since they are the ones most overtly depending on the mass public support and aiming to promote bottom-up decision-

⁴⁶ Translated from: “Bu şekilde TMMOB'u mali açıdan sıkıntıya sokacak adımlar atıldı. Çünkü TMMOB'un temel gelir kaynakları ilk olarak aidatlar sonra da bu tarz projeler ve uzmanlık eğitimleri. İşte bu tarz adımlarla gelirlerimizi kısma çalışmalarına maruz kaldık.”

⁴⁷ Translated from: “Tüm aktivitelere katılanlar aslında belli başlı insanlar. Bunu çok kolay anlayabilirsiniz, mesela bir seminere veya protestoya katılırsanız büyük olasılıkla oradaki herkes birbirini tanıyacaktır.”

making processes. An interviewee from a radical environmentalist CSO portrayed the problem of limited public support in the following words:

In fact, the people should carry out this movement, and the civil society should only take on the critical tasks in turning points with supporting mechanisms. But, at the moment, civil society finds itself in such a role that it tries to trigger the movement from the bottom to the top, tries to take action, and tries to get results.⁴⁸
(Interview 12)

The interviewees attribute this low public support to the increasing uncertainties about the outcomes of the attempts of participation, i.e., to the weakening of the formal participatory mechanisms. An interviewee summarized these concerns as such “It is too simple; even defending your tree can be a reason for you to be declared a terrorist. That is why these works cannot spread remarkably because people are afraid.”⁴⁹ (Interview 13)

This low public support is problematic when one considers that both CSOs and EMOs objects to the megaprojects based on the top-down decision-making processes along with their potentially detrimental environmental impacts. These two features characterize the hegemonic discourse which is defined as developmentalist and exclusionary at the beginning of this chapter. So, again, the CSOs' role for functioning as new participatory platforms becomes questionable when the bottom-up demand for participation remains low. Hence, in such a context, the rise of informal EMOs may be understood not as a grassroots action but instead as an intentional or unintentional consequence of the inability of the formal CSOs to

⁴⁸ Translated from: “Aslında insanlar bu hareketi yürütmeli, sivil toplum destek mekanizmaları ile dönemeçlerde kritik olan görevleri üstlenmeli. Ama şu anda baştan aşağı dürtten de, harekete geçmeye çalışan da sonuç almaya çalışan da o, böyle bir rolde buluyor kendisini.”

⁴⁹ Translated from: “Şöyle söyleyeyim çok basit ağacınızı savunmanız bile sizin terörist olarak ilan edilmenize gerekçe olabiliyor yani. Bu sebeple bu çalışmalar ciddi anlamda yayılamıyor, çünkü insanlar korkuyor.”

participate in the decision-making processes effectively. This is highly in line with the analysis of Boulding (2014) who argues that the type of participation the CSOs encourage depends on the political and institutional context of a country.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Boulding (2014) argues that the types of participation that CSOs encourage depend on the domestic context of a country. In less stable democracies with lower degrees of political institutionalization, the CSOs can encourage more contentious modes of participation since the political systems in these countries will fail to effectively function to enable participation through formal channels. Thus, in a context where participation through weak formal institutions becomes highly costly and inefficient, the CSOs can encourage more informal forms of participation intentionally or unintentionally. The radical environmentalist CSOs increasingly cooperation with the informal EMOs could be analyzed within such a framework. With the help of this close cooperation, the CSOs, intentionally or unintentionally, function as a service provider and transit-points to the informal EMOs. I draw this conclusion as I realize that the members of the EMOs are generally people experienced in environmentalist activism in CSOs and as the interviewees from EMOs told me how they are informally supported by the CSOs.

Although the interviewees from the radical environmentalist CSOs did not specifically mention their close cooperation with the EMOs as an alternative strategy of participation and resistance, the interviews with the members of the EMOs revealed the extent of the cooperation among these two groups. An interviewee summarized the relationship between radical environmentalist CSOs and EMOs in the following words:

They (referring to a radical environmentalist CSO) have opened an office recently. And, in doing so, their motivation was to help the social movements. Because of this, they provide us with an office. They gave us a key so that we can meet in their places. Another CSO also does the same. They also help us to announce our activities and protests. Moreover, there are several CSOs who say that they will help us in case of custody; they told they would provide us with an attorney.⁵⁰ (Interview 8)

Several other interviewees from EMOs mentioned the instances they use meeting places of radical environmentalist CSOs for activities or group meetings. This reveals that the radical environmentalist CSOs may have intentionally encouraged informal modes of participation by functioning like service providers to the EMOs. Though, what is more important for this research is whether there is an unintended effect of CSOs' changing experiences on the choices over the forms of political participation and social mobilization. Both conservationist and radical environmentalist CSOs have unintendedly served as a transit-points to the EMOs by increasing the associative activity, i.e., bringing together people with similar discontents and by giving them a chance to observe how the formal mechanisms increasingly fail to enable any form of effective participation. These two unintentional consequences are discussed in depth in the next chapter.

All interviewees from CSOs, including the conservationist ones, mentioned the need for developing a collective consciousness from grassroots and expressed their hope for what the EMOs may achieve. Even though the members of conservationist CSOs have also criticized how the environmental question is

⁵⁰ Translated from: "Daha yeni bir ofis açtılar. Hareketlere yardım etme motivasyonuyla çıktıkları için de bize ofis sağlıyorlar, onların yerlerinde buluşabiliyoruz bize anahtar verdiler. Aynı şekilde başka bir dernek de toplantılarımız için yerlerini kullanmamıza izin veriyor. Onun dışında etkinliklerin duyurulması, protestoların duyurulması gibi bir yardımlaşma var aramızda. Gözaltına alınma durumu olursa işte STKlardan falan destek olacaklar var, avukat sağlayacaklarını söylediler böyle bir durum olduğunda."

politicized by these movements, they outlined the need for social movements “to reach the masses” and, thus, “to be heard by the state.” An interviewee from a radical environmentalist CSO stated that the EMOs are necessary since they employ the strategies that are necessary to participate in the decision-making processes and to resist the mega projects by saying “all of these social movements based on direct action are actually what CSOs could not be. They add the actions that NGOs cannot do to their repertoire.”⁵¹ (Interview 6) These quotations show that the formal CSOs experience unique problems in reaching out to the masses and, also, to the state and expect EMOs to be able to better respond to the increasing limitations on civil society participation within the last decade.

All in all, this chapter strives to examine the modes and limits of civil society participation in the case of the three megaprojects in question, i.e., the Third Bridge and North Marmara Highway, Third Airport, and Canal Istanbul projects. I argued that the hegemonic developmentalist discourse has become increasingly exclusionary, and the projects are legitimized through this exclusionary discourse instead of the image of inclusion and participation. In such a context, the divided environment has gradually dissolved in such a way that neither the so-called conservationist nor the so-called radical environmentalist CSOs could achieve any form of effective participation. These categories have become obsolete as all of the CSOs has become highly critical to megaprojects and become active promoters of the counter-hegemonic discourse. The weaknesses in formal participatory mechanisms functioned as effective tools for the exclusion of the civil society from

⁵¹ Translated from: “Doğrudan eylem temelli bütün sosyal hareketler aslında STK’ların yapamadığı şeyler. Dolayısıyla STK’ların beceremediği eylemleri kendi repertuarlarına ekliyorlar.”

the decision making processes regardless of the historical and organizational characteristics, and strategic and discursive choices of the CSOs.

The exclusion of civil society actors from the decision-making processes is ensured by the increasing weaknesses in participatory institutions through which the CSOs could participate in the decision-making processes of the megaprojects.

Institutional weaknesses are observed via high discretion of the government over the implementation of plans, law and regulations, as well as increasing uncertainties about the consequences of formal participation mechanisms, such as report writing, taking legal action, authorized public activism. These unique conditions have considerably altered the socio-political roles of the CSOs and gradually wiped out the divided environment to the detriment of any form of civil society participation. All in all, this study shows that participation occurs strictly on the terms of the state and the CSOs' embeddedness into the state structures highly determines the modes and limits of their participation in decision-making processes.

CHAPTER 6

THE RISE OF ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS:

“DEFENSE” AND “REBELLION”

*“If there is hope, if we are going in a direction close to the happy end, it will be thanks to these movements. I exist where I live, and I want to live in this way. This demand will cause change.”*⁵² (Interview 12)

Until now, I have presented the changing sociopolitical roles of the CSOs and the increasing limits on civil society participation in the decision-making processes of the megaprojects through formal institutions. At the end of the previous chapter, I introduced the argument that the type of participation CSOs encourage is determined by the domestic context of a country, and they could, intentionally or unintentionally, encourage more contentious types of participation when the participatory institutions are weak. This tells us a lot about strategies and the position of the CSOs in undemocratic contexts. From this perspective, this chapter aims to explain the rise of informal EMOs in Istanbul as a response to the increasing weaknesses of formal participatory mechanisms and growing discontent over the CSOs’ inability to endorse counter-hegemonic discursive activities effectively.

As is extensively discussed in Chapter 3, Istanbul has experienced a radical neoliberal transformation between 2009 and 2019. Chapter 5 has scrutinized how this transformation and the resulting urban expansion were legitimized with the use of a

⁵² Translated from: “Bir umut varsa, mutlu sona yakın bir yöne gideceksek bu hareketler sayesinde olacaktır. Ben yaşadığım yerde varım ve burada da böyle yaşamak istiyorum. Bu talep değişime sebep olacak.”

developmentalist and exclusionary hegemonic discourse by the AKP. The weak institutions of civil society participation, characterized by low enforcement and low durability, rendered this mutation possible by depriving the CSOs of any effective strategy of formal participation, as discussed comprehensively in Chapter 5. Thus, being unable to participate in the decision-making processes through the use of conventional strategies such as report-writing, lobbying, taking legal action, and depoliticizing, the CSOs have experienced unique deadlocks.

The historical analysis of the evolution of CSO-state relations in Turkey, delineated in Chapter 4, has been built on the argument of the divided environment (Doyle, 2017). Though, in Chapter 5, I showed that the divided environment argument should be reconsidered considering that the experiences of the so-called conservationist and radical environmentalist CSOs have become increasingly similar once the state starts to seek legitimacy not through the image of civil society participation but through the increasingly exclusionary discourse that targets the actors in civil society. Hence, this reveals that such categorizations remain highly futile when the participation occurs strictly in the terms of the state considering that it is not the organizational, discursive and strategic choices of CSOs that put them in a category of included or excluded but it is the state's issue-based approach towards civil society participation. Thus, I think it is crucial to analyze the rise of EMOs in Istanbul within this context where the formal institutions of participation suffer from crucial weaknesses and increasing costs on CSOs' self-organization diminishes their capacity to employ counter-hegemonic discursive activities.

In this chapter, I strive to examine the mushrooming of EMOs in Istanbul within a decade with a focus on the increasing constraints on the formal participation mechanisms. I argue that the CSOs' changing experiences between 2009 and 2019

and increasing limitations on formal participation mechanisms have altered the forms of political participation that civil society actors seek. The findings in this chapter reveal that the increasing constraints on formal participation mechanisms have encouraged more contentious forms of participation by increasing dissent and mistrust towards participation through formal institutions. While there is insufficient data to support the argument that the CSOs intentionally support more contentious forms of political participation, I argue that they have unintentionally fostered contentious forms of participation by functioning as an alternative public space in which people observe the limitations on formal participatory mechanisms and come up with alternative social mobilization affords. This chapter will, first, examine the EMOs' organizational characteristics and motivations. Then, I will examine the EMOs' attempts to participate in the decision-making processes through the use of informality and direct action. Then, lastly, I will examine the discursive characteristics of the EMOs and argue that they strictly differ from CSOs based on their very political conceptualization of the nature of the environmental issues and their resulting willingness to employ a more political discourse.

6.1 Dissidents of weak institutional arrangements: EMOs

As discussed above, the decision-making and implementation processes of the megaprojects in question have created new institutional weaknesses and, thus, transformed the experiences of the civil society actors considerably. While the more institutionalized actors in civil society, i.e., CSOs, could respond effectively to some problems, their effectiveness could be considerably curtailed in some other cases, e.g., in the case of the megaprojects in question. The reason for this is, as I discussed in the previous chapter, is the CSOs' high dependence on the state structures. This

dependence is observed when, in Chapter 5, we discussed how the weakening of the participatory institutions and the mutation of the way the state tries to legitimize the processes of neoliberalization significantly impact *de facto* sociopolitical roles of the CSOs. The high dependence of the CSOs on the state structures has created unique problems for them once the institutions through which the civil society can participate in the decision-making processes have weakened between 2009 and 2019.

Few examples of these new institutional weaknesses are the high increasing discrepancy of the AKP government regarding the implementation of the 2009 Master Plan and the plan's low durability, implementation problems in legal participation mechanisms and their use as a procrastination mechanism for controlling the dissent, the practices such as pseudo meetings and one-way information sharing processes. The effects of these new institutional weaknesses on the CSOs are investigated thoroughly in Chapter 5. Hence, as discussed in Chapter 2, these weakening of the participatory institutions may also have a crucial impact on determining the forms of social mobilization. One of the outstanding conclusions that we have drawn in Chapter 5 was that the new institutional weaknesses, along with the exclusionary developmentalist hegemonic discourse, is the central mechanism through which the CSOs are effectively excluded from the decision-making processes of the megaprojects. In line with this, in chapter 2, I have presented the arguments of Boulding (2014), Machado, Scartascini, and Tommasi (2011) and Levitsky and Murillo (2013) who separately argue that the institutional arrangements can affect the forms of political participation and social mobilization.

The discussions over neoliberal urbanization in Istanbul examined Chapters 3 and the evolution of urban and environmental governance in Turkey, as discussed in Chapter 4 revealed that the formal state institutions of urban and environmental

governance foster a low degree of formal access to the state (Kriesi, 1995). As extensively discussed in Chapter 4, the state has pursued an agenda of neoliberal environmental governance defined by limited decentralization with implementation problems while, simultaneously, recentralized the processes of urban governance with the advancement of administrative centralization and deregulation of urban planning processes and development controls (Elicin, 2014; Kuyucu, 2017). This paradoxical coexistence of limited decentralization of environmental governance and the recentralization of urban governance has dramatically diminished the prospects of participation for civil society into the urban decision-making processes after 2009 (Unalan, 2016).

This limited decentralization and recentralization processes are combined with the increasing institutional weaknesses after 2009. This process is explained exclusively in Chapter 5. The formal institutions and mechanisms that are expected to foster greater civil society participation in the decision-making processes of urban and environmental governance, such as the 1/100.000 scaled 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul, has been revealed to be weak institutions. This has raised questions on the effectiveness of formal participation, which is proved to be considerably costly for the CSOs. Hence, once the 2009 Master Plan is proved to suffer from low durability and low implementation as the megaprojects located in the Northern Forests are introduced, the civil society actors' mistrust towards formal participation institutions has increased as indicated. This process is extensively discussed in Chapter 5. So, considering the context-driven nature of choice over the forms of political participation, how can we understand the informal mobilization affords of EMOs?

The central aim of the EMOs in Istanbul is to mobilize a bottom-up resistance to the neoliberal urban and environmental transformation of the city. When asked

about the problems of the city, all the interviewees from EMOs have given more or less the same answer, which emphasized the fact that “Istanbul, nowadays, gets through a chaotic transition and transformation period. This is, of course, the result of certain policies. It is a city that experiences an ecological crisis. In many ways.”⁵³ (Interview 13) The urban expansion of Istanbul through the Northern Forests is seen as the “primary threat” for the environment and the future of the city. Unlike the members of CSOs, the interviewees from EMOs mentioned how the environmental question has been increasingly intertwined with the urban question in recent years and, thus, they define themselves as “the urban and environmental advocates.”⁵⁴

The urban character of the EMOs has three components: their field of activity, the belief that “the city has to be stopped” for preventing environmental degradation in a greater area, and their discourse. Many of the interviewees from informal EMOs draw attention to the fact that city is the reason for the environmentally hazardous activities in a much larger area and, thus, it is the place that should initiate a pattern change for preventing environmental degradation in a much larger area. An interviewee expressed the primary importance attached to the urban environmental problems in the following words:

All the struggle should be given here since, for example, the Hydroelectric Power Plants (HEPP) at the Black Sea region are not built for the villages there but for generating resources for the consumption here. This city has to be stopped immediately. This is a responsibility that we put on the city and a reproach to the state.

⁵⁵ (Interview 12)

⁵³ Translated from: “İstanbul şu anda biraz kaotik bir geçiş dönemi yaşıyor. Bu tabii ki belli politikaların sonucu. İstanbul bugün ekolojik kriz yaşayan bir kent. Her anlamda.”

⁵⁴ Translated from: “Kent ve çevre savunucuları”

⁵⁵ Translated from: “Çevre krizinin hem nedeni hem muhatabı burası. Aslında tüm mücadele burada verilmeli çünkü mesela HES’ler de Karadenizdeki köyler için dikilmiyor buradaki tüketime kaynak oluşturmak için kuruluyor. Buranın acilen durdurulması lazım. Bu bizim şehre yüklediğimiz bir sorumluluk ve devlete bir sitem.

As this quotation indicates, the EMOs underscored the importance of being able to participate in the decision-making processes of neoliberal urbanization not only for protecting the urban environment itself but also for averting the environmental degradation at the national and global levels.

EMOs in Istanbul generally consists of people who are experienced in civil society activism as they had been active members and workers of environmental CSO before participating in EMOs. Therefore, all the interviewees had well-established opinions about the CSOs' prospects of participation in the urban environmental governance of Istanbul. The common reasons for these people to left CSOs and become active members of EMOs were twofold. Firstly, they argued that organizational characteristics such as hierarchy, careerization, and concerns for funding lead inefficiency in the operations of formal CSOs. Secondly, there was a common acknowledgment of the fact that participation through formal institutions has been more difficult as the hegemonic developmentalist discourse becomes increasingly exclusionary. Furthermore, the interviewees have also emphasized the formal participation mechanisms induce depoliticization and moderation; thus, lead CSOs to set aside the roots of the problems. All of these common points reveal the skeptical attitude of the EMOs towards the CSOs along with the state.

The interviewees repetitively mentioned how “institutionalization brings unwieldiness.”⁵⁶ This is a very crucial point of discussion considering that the CSOs' inability to participate in the decision-making processes effectively is explained with reference to their high level of institutionalization, which makes them subject to

⁵⁶ Translated from: “Kurumsallaşmak hantallık getiriyor”

weakly institutionalized state structures. The joint skepticism towards institutionalization is depicted well by an interviewee in the following words:

People have learned. They understood that the movement faced direct bureaucracy at the point of becoming an association or foundation. They understood that they could not take any step at that point and that this is a regressive factor in the movement's struggle to make itself. So, they just started to act.⁵⁷ (Interview 12)

At the level of discourse, this “unwieldiness” is revealed through the CSOs’ attempts to maintain a depoliticized discourse. The members of the EMOs extensively argued that depoliticization creates self-constraints and leads to inefficiency, which, in the end, led them to “take the initiative”⁵⁸ and “shoulder the responsibility.”⁵⁹ An interviewee expressed his/her motivation to gradually break ties with the CSOs in the following words:

While more extensive, bolder activities could be done; it made me uncomfortable to do softer things only because of the political situation. You can talk about climate change, deforestation, but make sure not to link it to any political issue. I have experienced a state of conflict there.⁶⁰ (Interview 9)

When asked the reasons for high levels of depoliticization in civil society, the interviewees from EMOs generally referred to “the balance that the CSOs should take into consideration”⁶¹ and argued that “the CSOs are uncertain about how they

⁵⁷ Translated from: “İnsanlar öğrendiler. Hareketin dernekleşme vakıflaşma noktasında direkt bürokrasi ile karşı karşıya kaldığı ve o noktada adım atamadıkları ve bunun hareketin kendini var etmeye çalışırken çabasını geriletici bir unsur olduğunu anladılar. Bu yüzden, sadece hareket etmeye başladılar.”

⁵⁸ Translated from: “İnisiyatif almak”

⁵⁹ Translated from: “Elini taşın altına koymak”

⁶⁰ Translated from: “Daha kapsamlı, daha cesur eylemler, etkinlikler yapabilecekken, sadece politik durumlardan dolayı daha yumuşak şeyler yapmak beni rahatsız etti. İklim değişikliğinden, ormansızlaşmadan bahsedebilirsin ama bunu asla politikaya bağlamadığından emin ol... Orada bir çatışma hali yaşadım...”

⁶¹ Translated from: “STK'ların dikkate alması gereken denge”

could involve into the politics, their space has been contracting. Either in macro or micro, now, they are away from doing politics they miss to do.”⁶² (Interview 4).

Thus, the EMOs in Istanbul has been primarily motivated, firstly, by the aggressive and exclusionary neoliberal urbanization policies of the AKP government, and, secondly, by the institutional gridlocks of civil society participation through formal channels. The interviews with the members of the EMOs revealed that the people experienced in civil society activism had faced the institutional gridlocks that CSOs experience when they try to participate in the decision-making processes effectively and when they try to promote the counter-hegemonic environmentalist discourse. This increased associative activity encourages them to think about alternative ways through which effective participation could be possible.

Here, it is crucial to understand that this dissent towards the institutionalization of civil society, combined with the dissent towards the weak institutionalization of the participatory mechanisms, is an unintended consequence of the increased associative activities of CSOs, as discussed by Boulding (2014). Taking these into account, the case of EMOs in Istanbul contradicts the arguments of McCarty and Zald (1977), who state that the social movements emerge as a result of the creation or manipulation of discontent by elites or entrepreneurs. Instead, the interviewees from EMOs in Istanbul outstandingly emphasized their grassroots origin and their discontent towards the inadequacy of the more institutionalized actors, like state and CSOs, in accordance with the arguments of Tilly (1984). The primary importance attached to the maintenance of the high level of depoliticization by the CSOs hurts the level of cooperation between the CSOs and EMOs, which is

⁶² Translated from: “STK'lar siyasete nasıl dahil olabileceklerinden emin değiller, alanları daralıyor. Makro ya da mikro olarak, özledikleri siyaseti yapmaktan uzaklar.”

highly in line with the arguments of Jad (2007) who diagnoses the downgrading effect of CSO's depoliticization on the potential and legitimacy of social movements.

Besides, the case of three megaprojects in question reveals that the high level of depoliticization of the CSOs may, also, hurt the legitimacy of the CSOs themselves considering that the state accuses the CSOs to be unscientific and away from political-neutrality when the CSOs try to endorse counter-hegemonic discursive activities on occasions. For example, as I referred before, TEMA has been criticized by the Ministry of Environment and Urban Affairs after they have published the report objecting to the three megaprojects based on their potentially hazardous consequences on the environment and their top-down decision-making processes. So, depoliticization is effectively used by the state as a tool both to control the civil society in order to maintain hegemonic discourse and to absorb any counter-hegemonic discursive activity.

All in all, a careful investigation of the motivations, activities, and discourse of CSOs and EMOs reveals that they do not only use different strategies but also respond to different problems. Thus, I think it would be ungrounded to simply assume that the CSOs and EMOs are two different forms of organizations that complement each other and share a common identity, as suggested by Rootes (2016). My field study, as well as the document research, leads me to conclude that the EMOs do not only try to support and compensate the CSOs. Instead, they are the mobilization effort emerged out of the deadlocks resulting from the weak formal institutions of participation, increasingly exclusionary hegemonic discourse, and the growing contrast between the roles attributed to the CSOs and their *de facto* socio-political roles. An interviewee from an EMO draw attention to this point in a similar way as such:

I do not think that NGOs are incomplete, and these movements have a role in supporting and compensating them. On the contrary, since NGOs have full-time employees in conducting a campaign, NGOs can better construct the legal dimension of the subject they work, can better know the sensitivity of the actors in the subject (...) So, it is a method. On the other hand, the other (EMOs) is part of the social opposition.⁶³ (Interview 12)

To put it shortly, EMOs did not emerge to compensate for the deficiencies of the CSOs functioning in a non-democratic setting, but they emerged out of it.

6.2 Strategies of participation and resistance of EMOs

Until now, I have covered the dissent-driven and context-dependent emergence of the EMOs in Istanbul. I have argued that the weakening of formal institutions and the resulting limitations on civil society participation through formal mechanisms have encouraged more informal modes of social mobilization and political participation. Now, I will examine the organizational features and the set of strategies of EMOs to consider what kind of tolls is generated to overcome the problems deriving from exclusionary developmentalist hegemonic discourse and weak institutional arrangements.

The key organizational feature of these EMOs is horizontalism, which refers to the non-hierarchical processes of decision-making, non-ideological allegiance, and the aim of bottom-up mobilization and transformation, as explained by the interviewees. Horizontalism is stated to be of vital importance for all of the interviewees from EMOs since it is the fundamental characteristic that differentiates them from the institutionalized actors of civil society. It is believed to cure the

⁶³ Translated from: “STKların eksik, yatay örgütlerin onları destekleyici tamamlayıcı rolü olduğunu düşünmüyorum aksine bir kampanya yürütmek konusunda STKlar tam zamanlı çalışanları olduğu için, çalıştığı konunun hukuki boyutunu, çalıştığı konudaki aktörlerin hassasiyetlerini (...) Haliyle o bir yöntem. Diğer taraftan, diğeri (yatay örgütlenmeler) toplumsal muhalefetin bir parçası.”

problems associated with hierarchy and professionalism, and to “open a space for the people wanting to do something”⁶⁴ (Interview 12). This perspective signifies the desire to create a public sphere through these EMOs for people to attend and contribute to easily. The creation of a public sphere for the promotion of the counter-hegemonic discourse is crucial for the EMOs since, unlike CSOs, they prioritize their function of “contribution to the public sphere” over self-organization (Young, 2002). Informality and horizontalism diminish their concerns for self-organization, considering that the maintenance of their self-organization does not depend on the approval of the state. To be able to prioritize the contribution to the public sphere over the self-organization, the EMOs have defined themselves as “movements.” Below in this chapter, I will give details on how they put forward their “movement” status even if they have an association named after the movement. This could be explained as an attempt to escape from the “unwieldiness” that institutionalization is believed to bring along in a weakly institutionalized environment.

To sustain horizontalism within the group and to encourage the participation of the wider public, the EMOs strictly forbid opening flags that express identification with any ideological or political groups in their activities and meetings. Thus, they try to ensure that a group does not take over the image and control of the EMO and the EMO remains as “an open space” to all. This rule is maintained since the EMOs have emerged because the movements want to increase, or at least sustain, already limited human resources they have. They, also, believe that within-group diversity is a wealth that can exempt the movements from the accusations that they are politically ideological groups. Gezi events are of crucial importance here, since this

⁶⁴ Translated from: “Bir şey yapmak isteyen insanlar için alan açmak için.”

principle of the prohibition of the flags and slogans is originated to the Gezi events. Drawing attention to this point, an interviewee stated that “We have seriously organized not to take flags and political slogan in the Gezi events. (...) After the event got bigger, everyone opened their flags, etc., but I think this is something that marginalizes the Gezi movement”⁶⁵ (Interview 11). Knowing that these movements have emerged just after the Gezi events and by the people who have participated in the Gezi protests, these quote and many others show that the organizational preferences of the movements are shaped following the informal social mobilization affords in Gezi events. The interviewees have further given more examples of their dedication to keep all the symbols away and provide an “open space” for all. For example, they had mentioned the occasions when they dissolved a meeting, refused the support of the political parties and CSOs, and did not participate in particular events because of the concern for this image of inclusiveness embedded in the idea of horizontalism.

All of the interviewees from informal EMOs, also, underlined that although horizontalism prevents hierarchy and domination of any ideological or political identification within the group, the public support remains limited. During my field research, I have participated in weekly meetings and activities of the EMOs, and I have, indeed, observed that the public support for the EMOs remains very limited and generally merges with the sociopolitical cleavages in Turkey. Even if the movements emphasize horizontalism and, thus, prioritize the image of inclusiveness, the integration of the urban environmental question into the daily political debates

⁶⁵ Translated from: “Geziye bayrak ve siyasi slogan sokmama işini biz ciddi şekilde örgütledik. (...) Büyüdükten sonra herkes bayrağını falan açtı ama bunun Geziyi marjinalleştiren bir şey olduğunu düşünüyorum ben.

and struggles makes it harder to achieve overarching public support for the EMOs.

An interviewee explained how they try to prevent the EMOs to function as an extension and multiplication of pre-existing sociopolitical cleavages in the country:

We try to take great care in this matter. For example, some people among us are also active in CHP. We do not allow those friends to create an atmosphere like this place is a place having such political identification. For example, they came to the meetings and assume that those who come to the meeting will already participate in the party works about the upcoming election. Then we refused to participate, they were shocked and said who will participate if even you do not. (...) We told this is not a place like that, this movement will keep its independence and, in the long run, will, at least, achieve to cooperate with all of the different segments in the country.⁶⁶ (Interview 11)

For most of the interviewees, horizontalism is the best organizational model to achieve this overarching public support that surpasses pre-existing sociopolitical cleavages in the country. Though, still, the within-group diversity remains limited as these movements have been associated with “the Gezi events” and “opposition to the government.” This, though, is used as a tool to legitimize the hegemonic developmentalist discourse through exclusion. For example, the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has referred the EMOs protesting against the Third Airport project as “Gezi-minded”⁶⁷ and accused them on the grounds that they are against the development of the country (“Gezi Zekalılar Bu Havalimanını,” 2014).

Unlike CSOs, EMOs employ more contentious strategies of political participation.

As discussed above in detail, they aim to create a public sphere for the promotion of

⁶⁶ Translated from: “Biz bu konuda çok özen göstermeye çalışıyoruz. Mesela içimizde bir kısım arkadaş var CHP’de de aktif olan. O arkadaşların zaten burası böyle politik bir kimliği olan bir yer gibi bir hava oluşturmalarına izin vermiyoruz. Mesela toplantıya geliyor arkadaşlar ve toplantıya gelenlerin parti seçim çalışmalarına zaten katılacağını varsayıyor. Sonra biz reddettik katılmayı, şok oldular, nasıl yani siz katılmayacaksanız kim katılacak dediler. Dedik öyle bir yer değil burası, burası bağımsızlığını koruyacak ve belediyeyi denetlemek üzere kendini var edecek, uzun vadede bütün farklı kesimlerle en azından iş yapmayı değerlendirecek.”

⁶⁷ Translated from: “Gezizekalı”. This term is a paromasis of the word idiot (Gerizekalı in Turkish).

the counter-hegemonic discourse through direct action. In doing so, they try to avoid increasing institutional weaknesses through informality. Furthermore, they endorse a limited political discourse that challenges the state-determined boundaries of what could be politicized while also challenging the hegemonic discourse. These three points are discussed below in detail with a particular emphasis on how informality, new political discourse, and direct action are believed to achieve better political participation for civil society actors.

6.2.1 Informality: avoiding the costs of institutionalization

Since this thesis pays attention to the effects of the weak formal institutions on the modes and limits of civil society participation, the EMOs' preference for informality should be considered thoroughly to investigate how the civil society actors' experiences change when their dependence on the state structures reduce. McAdams et al. (1996) have defined the social movements based on their informality and the intended disruptiveness of their chosen strategies of participation. Hence, here, instead of taking this informality as given, I try to understand why and how they have chosen informality to be able to conclude the costs of institutionalization of civil society and the weak institutionalization of formal state institutions.

I diagnose that instead of being a given, informality is a conscious choice of the EMOs who aims to achieve effective participation and resistance in a context where formal institutions of participation are proved to be increasingly ineffective and costly for the civil society actors. One of the informal EMOs, Northern Forests Defense analyzed in this thesis have, also, a formal association named after it, Northern Forests Association. The reasons for this formal body to be built were financial and legal. First of all, the interviewees from KOS stated that as the

activities and the number of members increased, the need for funding has become more crucial and, thus, they have decided to collect a monthly membership fee. Though, this required an active usage of an official bank account belonging to an association, which urged them to establish such a legal entity. Secondly, the interviewees stated that the association had served them to have a legal personality through which they can appeal to the legal processes of participation, such as bringing a lawsuit against the projects, plan changes, etc. An interviewee summarized the instrumental role attached to the association as such:

The association is a structure created only to be involved in legal cases, to open a meeting place and to collect donations. Even the bureaucratic works of the association are carried out only to keep it as a tool, just like how we have demonstrations as a tool, we keep association as a tool as well.⁶⁸ (Interview 12)

The members of the KOS repetitively underlined that they come together and organize activities under the name of Northern Forests Defense and only keep the association as a means to be used when needed. When we consider the joint dissent for the institutionalization of the civil society as I mentioned above in this chapter, it becomes a bit contradictory for EMOs to establish legal entities. Though, my field research and document research convinced me that the KOS, indeed, organize under the label “defense.” They mention the association neither in public sphere activities nor in their meetings, seminars, etc. Hence, even if they won a legal case against the projects, they have announced it as the success of the defense.

For example, KOS has opened a lawsuit against the “EIA Unnecessary” decision for the stone pit area that would provide the Third Airport project with the

⁶⁸ Translated from: “Dernek sadece davalara müdahil olabilmek için, mekân açabilmek, bağış toplayabilmek için oluşturulan bir yapı. Derneğin yapılması gereken bürokratik işleri bile sadece bir araç olarak elimizde dursun, eylemlerimiz nasıl bir araç olarak duruyorsa o da dursun diye yapılıyor.”

necessary material. When they won the case after two years, the achievement is announced on the website of the defense without reference to the association. So, in line with what the interviewees say, the association, indeed, is used only as a tool for several functions. While they use association to collect fees and donations, to open a meeting place and to open cases, they avoid the negative externalities of institutionalization by organizing all their public sphere activities with the name of “defense.” Also, since the association is only a legal entity without any official activity, it does not seek approval or greater cooperation with the state. Thus, its dependence on the state structures is very low. In this way, the public sphere discursive activities of the defense do not harm association and the bureaucratic and administrative controls on the association does not affect the defense since no official link exists between these two separate entities. I think this is a very innovative solution to escape from the “unwieldiness” of institutionalization while, also, benefiting from the technical advantages that institutionalization brings along.

The second EMO analyzed in this thesis is Istanbul City Defense. The members of this EMO have stated that they have recently discussed whether to open a legal entity attached to the movement and decided not to. The reason why they decided not to open an association like that of KOS is explained by an interviewee in the following words: “There are similar associations, we use their legality together when needed. We also did not want to deal with the association bureaucracy.”⁶⁹ (Interview 11). This depicts well how the associations established by some of the EMOs are seen only as instrumental tools. Besides, this also shows the high level of cooperation among the EMOs. The interviewees from IKS, as well, highlighted the

⁶⁹ Translated from: “Benzer dernekler var zaten, ihtiyaç olduğunda onların yasallığını kullanıyoruz beraberce. Bir de dernek bürokrasiyle uğraşmayı pek istemedik.

fact that even if one day they establish a formal association, “it will be a means and we will continue to organize not the association but our struggle.”⁷⁰ (Interview 11). So, keeping the informality intact is one of the crucial common points in all the interviews made with the members of the EMOs.

The third EMO analyzed in this thesis, Extinction Rebellion-Turkey, is relatively new and differs from the other two EMOs on the basis that their main concern is climate change. Since this EMO has global roots and, globally, chooses to maintain its informality, the branch in Istanbul has also started to organize informally. Even though the primary motivation of this EMO is to fight against the global climate change by organizing domestic struggles throughout the world, the branch in Istanbul is closely in touch with the local EMOs that fights against the neoliberal urbanization and environmental degradation in the city. They actively participate in activities and protests against the abrupt environmental degradation in Istanbul and criticize the neoliberal developmentalist hegemonic discourse of the government. Interviewees from this EMO stated they have never seriously considered being a formal association, but, also, mentioned the problems associated with informality.

While all EMOs were upholding their informality as a crucial point differentiating them from the more institutionalized actors, they have mentioned the financial problems related to informality, such as the lack of formal mechanisms for collecting membership fee and getting funding from larger organizations. Though, the interviewee has drawn attention to the fact that collecting money from the members and getting external funding has the potential to weaken the organization

⁷⁰ Translated from: “(...) bizim için dernek bir araç olacak, biz derneği değil mücadelemizi örgütlemeye devam edeceğiz.”

for two reasons. Firstly, funding can create dependence on money and may lead to moderation and money-oriented project-making. Secondly, competition over funding among the EMOs may hurt cooperation. Drawing attention to these facts and explaining their reluctance for external funding an interviewee diagnosed that “That was one of the most important things that have weakened the CSOs. There is no inadequacy of funds in CSOs; there is an inadequacy of action.”⁷¹ (Interview 8). Here, action refers to the direct action and counter-hegemonic discursive activities taking place in the public sphere. In Chapter 5, with reference to Young (2002) and Lewis (2013), I explained that the CSOs in Istanbul could not effectively participate in decision-making processes since they should consider their self-organization over their contribution to the public sphere. Funding is an essential factor that contributes to the maintenance of the self-organization. Thus, EMOs prioritizing their counter-hegemonic sociopolitical roles over their self-organization refrains from external funding, which, in the end, decreases the necessity for institutionalization.

So, even if all of the three EMOs underscored the financial costs associated with informality, they still prioritize informality and try to eliminate these problems either by establishing perfunctory formal associations or by benefiting from the formal personalities of the radical environmentalist CSOs or other EMOs. When asked why they have prioritized to operate informally, the interviewees unanimously mentioned the lower bureaucratic burden. In Chapter 5, I have examined how getting an official permission for public sphere activism is a demanding and restraining process even for the formal CSOs. Thus, lacking this formality, the EMOs could not

⁷¹ Translated from: “Bir noktadan sonra sen bir etkinlik için para toplayacağına para almak için proje üretmeye başlıyorsun. Paraya bağımlı hale geliyorsun. Bu da STKları zayıflatan en önemli şeylerden biriydi bu aslında. STKlarda fon olarak bir eksiklik yok, eylem olarak bir eksiklik var.”

take any permission for public protest or demonstration. Hence, the interviewees from EMOs stated that they choose not to seek such permission. All in all, informality enables the employment of more discursive activities by the EMOs since their dependence on state structures diminishes considerably.

Through keeping their informality intact, the EMOs challenge the system of control established by the state that requires civil society actors to maintain visibility and predictability. Wiktorowicz (2000) argues that this enables the state to control the public space since the state would be able to discourage any counter-hegemonic activity through administrative and repressive mechanisms. Hence, the EMOs' informality could be seen as a significant threat to this system of control established by the state. Within this theoretical framework, it is expected that the state would effectively try to discourage this informality through different means to be able to sustain its control over the public space and the hegemonic discourse. However, when the CSOs functioning formally are considerably excluded from the decision-making processes and face high costs in exchange for seeking participation through formal mechanisms, the formal participation could be discouraged by the state as well. So, the strict control of formal civil society actors could actually encourage informality by decreasing the prospects for effective participation. In order to understand how this informality is discouraged or unintentionally encouraged by the state, we shall discuss the experiences of EMOs based on their public sphere activism.

6.2.2 Direct action: finding novel ways of participation

The primary strategy of participation and resistance of informal EMOs is public activism via direct action. Direct action which is, most of the time, conducted

without necessary official permissions, can take the form of public demonstrations, public announcements, and more innovative forms of protests such as sit-ins, marches, symbolic walking-tours to claim right on the project sites, garbage collection activities to show the ignorance of the state and the environmental hazard of the construction projects, human chains to show dedication and to draw public attention. The will to employ direct action is argued to be the most crucial difference between the CSOs and the EMOs. An interviewee from an EMO draw attention to this fact in the following words:

The CSOs have some limits; this is the critical difference between us. We believe that different things have to be done and unless this responsibility has been taken all determinations remain in the reports and will have no use. (...) For example, WWF has issued this report having a harsh title, Either Canal or Istanbul. Nevertheless, what kind of noise it makes about this project, we look at it. We should scream, but we live in silence. From my perspective, if you do not get the community to take action, you are going to be a perpetrator of the threat.⁷² (Interview 12)

This was a popular way of thinking among the members of the EMOs. They argued that the CSOs' reluctance/inability to endorse public sphere activism ends up making the CSOs agents serving to the maintenance of the status quo and the hegemonic discourse.

Hence, this is highly in line with the arguments of Wiktorowicz (2000), who argues that the CSOs provide legitimacy to the non-democratic states at the expense of greater democratic participation. Though, in Chapter 5, I have covered that the CSOs may generate and promote counter-hegemonic discourses on occasions. Even

⁷² Translated from: "STKların bir sınırları var, ve temel farkımız da bu yani. Biz daha farklı şeylerin yapılması gerektiğini düşünüyoruz, o sorumluluk alınmadığı takdirde yapılan bütün tespitler raporlarda kalır, hiçbir işe yaramaz. (...) Mesela WWF bu raporu çıkardı ve çok ağır bir başlığı var" Ya Kanal Ya İstanbul" diye. Fakat buna yönelik nasıl bir gürültü kopardı, biz buna bakarız. Bizim çığlık atmamız gerekiyor ama biz bir sessizlik içerisinde yaşıyoruz. Toplumun harekete geçmesini sağlamazsan, sende o tehlikenin tehdidin bir sürdürücüsü olursun benim nazarımda."

if WWF-Turkey did not employ direct action, the report they have written was highly critical of the megaprojects in question and constructed an alternative public sphere for the discussion and promotion of counter-hegemonic discourses. So, in the case of the three megaprojects, the CSOs' activities did not serve the legitimization of the processes of neoliberal urbanization in Istanbul, as suggested by the literature. As I have extensively discussed in Chapter 5, the state itself did not seek the legitimacy provided by civil society participation. On the other hand, they could not be sufficient enough to change the trajectory of these top-down projects either.

The interviewees from informal EMOs see the employment of direct action as essential to be able to participate in the decision-making processes of these megaprojects effectively. This necessity is generally attributed to the low implementation and low durability problems of the formal participation mechanism. For example, the interviewees were very skeptical about the legal participation mechanism and repetitively referred to cases where the decisions to stop execution did not execute. An interviewee explained how the common dissent towards the weaknesses formal institutions encourage more contentious types of political participation as such "We have learned that certain roads are closed, and direct intervention is required for their change."⁷³ (Interview 12)

The direct action has considerable costs for the EMOs. The EMOs frequently face problems of extensive police surveillance and disproportionate police intervention. As mentioned above, the state's attitude towards these unauthorized activities is ambivalent. There is considerable uncertainty concerning whether the police will allow the protests or demonstrations to be

⁷³ Translated from: "Belli yolların kapalı olduğunu ve bunların değişimi için de doğrudan bir müdahale gerektiğini öğrendik."

conducted or not. Since none of the EMOs, even if KOS who has an association named after it, apply for official permissions, they almost always confront the police. Though, the interviewees say that the response is very unpredictable. This uncertainty is increased after Gezi events in a particular way. The protests and demonstrations about urban and environmental issues are allowed so long as the authorities believe that it will remain marginal and are unproportionally suppressed if believed otherwise. An interviewee summarized the changing attitude of the state towards the informal social mobilization affords with reference to Gezi events as such:

Before the process leading to the Gezi events, we were doing all kinds of demonstrations, public announcements, etc. (...) Then the rulers decided on stiffness. Gezi was an answer. Now, they attack places where there is a threat of growth, but they overlook the places they thought will remain minor. What will happen is especially ambivalent for the urban environmental activists because they either unexpectedly allow a protest or close the roads, bring three buses of police for a protest of three people.⁷⁴
(Interview 11)

The ambivalent attitude of the state towards civil society actors is, also, discussed by Paker et al. (2013), as I mentioned in Chapter 2. They attribute this ambivalent attitude to the fact that civil society participation occurs on the state's terms, which gives the state the *de facto* right of case-selection. The case-selection is made by the state following its' modernist priorities (Paker et al., 2013, p. 766). These priorities shape the hegemonic discourse, which is, as I discussed in Chapter 5, exclusively developmentalist in this case.

⁷⁴ Translated from: "Gezi olaylarına götüren süreçten önce her türlü gösteri duyuru falan yapabiliyorduk. (...) Sonra yöneticiler bir sertlik kararı aldı. Gezi buna bir cevaptı. Şimdi, büyüme tehdidi olan yerlere saldırıyorlar, ancak küçük kalacağını düşündükleri yerlere göz ardı ediyorlar. Özellikle kentsel ve çevre aktivistleri için belirsiz çok büyük, çünkü beklenmedik bir şekilde bir protestoya izin verebiliyorlar veya üç kişilik bir protesto için yolları kapatıp üç otobüs polis getirebiliyorlar.

6.2.3 Attempts of politicization: a new political discourse

In Chapter 5, I have examined in detail how the CSOs' embeddedness into the state structures necessitates the endorsement of a more depoliticized discourse by the CSOs. I argued that the conservationist CSOs upheld a high level of depoliticization in the quest for better and sustained relations with the state. In line with this argument, in Chapter 2, I have presented Young's (2002) conceptualization of civil society which depicts well the dilemma of the CSOs in trying to promote the counter-hegemonic discourse while also striving for maintaining their self-organization. Though, since EMOs' self-organization is exempt from the state intervention as a consequence of their informality, one could expect them to generate a new relatively more political discourse.

First of all, EMOs profoundly differ from CSOs based on their intended level of (de)politicization. The EMOs acknowledge how urban environmental question is a political question that needs political discussion and, ultimately, a political solution. When the interviewees from informal EMOs are asked whether the EMOs are political organizations or not, all interviewees stated that the EMOs are political and oppositional with an emphasis on the necessity to be so. In Chapter 2, I have discussed that depoliticization is observed "when the exercise of hegemonic power and the antagonisms that result from it are covered up" (Kenis & Lievens, 2014, p. 535). So, in the case of the three megaprojects in question, we would define the discussion over the core of the environmental problems, such as the exclusionary hegemonic developmentalist discourse and neoliberal environmental and urban policies, as being political. Furthermore, I have evaluated the tolerance towards the political actors and symbols within the organizations or cooperation with the political

actors as an indicator of politicization since it reveals the organization's perspective over the nature of the question.

Considering the generation and promotion of the counter-hegemonic discourse, the EMOs are, indeed, highly political organizations. In their public protests, demonstrations, or other public sphere activities, the EMOs openly accuses the government based on its neoliberal development policies that aim to generate development through construction while disregarding its environmental costs. No technical adjustment is asked for the three megaprojects in question. Instead, the EMOs ask for their cancellation and, as I mentioned above, "the need to stop the city" to prevent environmental degradation in a greater area. Thus, as oppose to the hegemonic developmentalist discourse that idealizes the concept of "megacity" for Istanbul, the EMOs endorse a strictly counter-hegemonic discourse that suggests "moratorium" for the city. As I explained above, their informality contributes a lot to their ability to generate a counter-hegemonic discourse since they remain exempt from the disciplinary techniques of the bureaucracy and the administrative control over their self-organization. Then, can we assume that the EMOs can employ a political discourse without any limit?

Considering the crucial role of the domestic context and political institutions in determining the forms of political participation and social mobilization, we cannot merely assume that the EMOs are totally independent of these effects since they operate informally. Being political and oppositional has some limits in the cases of EMOs as well. There were a very limited number of occasions when any political party name has mentioned during the interviews, weekly meetings, and other activities that I have attended during my fieldwork and, also, in the interviews. Very often when an opposition political party name was used by one of the members in the

course of the discussion, some other member informed the rest (mostly the newcomers) about the non-political identification of the group and the need for not relying on the political actors and, the civil society organizations with specific political inclinations and, even, the international funds that may have some kind of connection with the domestic or international opposition groups.

In an in-depth interview, one of the EMO members told that although they could take a bunch of funds from the international actors they refrained from doing so because, he/she says, “the organization you take the fund from may have some connection with different groups and you may not know this when taking the fund, but this may cause trouble in the future” (Interview 1)⁷⁵. Likewise, interviewees from two other EMOs, as well, expressed their reluctance to take external funding in order not to be seen as allied to an actor with an exclusive political stance (Interview 11, 12). The interviewees from Extinction Rebellion, the only EMO with global roots and established global connections, also, referred to occasions when their connection to a global political and oppositional groups left them in a difficult situation because of the group’s public statements on the issues that are related to the daily political discussions in Turkey. Thus, this EMO, as well, informed the global connections about their autonomy and asked for greater consideration of EMOs' subjectivity to the domestic context of Turkey.

When asked whether they can get support from the political parties, one of the interviewees has told me that “We do not get, but we do not want either. Our first

⁷⁵ Translated from: “Fonu aldığınız kurumların farklı gruplarla ilişkisi olabilir ve siz bunu fonu alırken bilmeyebilirsiniz ama bu sizi daha sonra sıkıntıya düşürebilir”

addressees are not the political parties”⁷⁶ (Interviewee 2). On talking about the political parties, another interviewee said:

Whom can we trust? Those in the opposition are also contractors. Let us say we can talk with HDP (People’s Democratic Party). Nevertheless, still, we would not allow them to come to our protests and open their flags. That is what the parties always want to do. Even if we asked them to participate individually, they bring with themselves their political arguments.⁷⁷ (Interview 3)

This neutral attitude towards the political parties was immanent in other interviews, as well. The reasons all interviewees have abstained from building any alliance with and taking any support from any of the political parties are to sustain a more neutral stance, and thus avoid from the cost of politicization, the general mistrust towards the “contractor” political parties, and the wish to increase the public support. The importance attached to neutrality is so great that an interviewee has even argued that “As a political actor starts to plant a flag that is when all fight is over”⁷⁸ (Interview 2). This limited politicization that strictly upholds political party neutrality brings some benefits as well as costs. Interviewees gave instances of how they struggle to choose the cases to be involved because of the concern to remain independent of any institutionalized political opposition. Limited politicization defined by the limited cooperation and alliance with the political parties and groups with explicit political identifications aims to keep the envisaged goals of the group limited and, thus, diminishes the perceived threats to groups’ interests.

⁷⁶ Translated from: “Almıyoruz, ama almak istemiyoruz da. Bizim ilk adresimiz siyasi partiler değil.”

⁷⁷ Translated from: “Kime güvenebiliriz ki? Muhalefettekiler de müteahhit. Belki HDP ile konuşabiliriz. Ama yine de protestolarımıza gelip bayrak açmalarına asla müsaade etmeyiz. Partiler her zaman böyle yapmak istiyor. Onlardan bireysel olarak katılım göstermelerini rica etsek bile politik tartışmalarını da beraberlerinde getiriyorlar.”

⁷⁸ Translated from: “Politik bir aktör gelip bayrağını diktiği zaman verdiğimiz tüm mücadele son bulmuş demektir.”

Although there is general mistrust towards the inclusion of political actors into the fight they have been giving, the members continuously mention the “need for coming together” to achieve their far-reaching claims and the necessity to take a position that “the opposite side of society could support.”⁷⁹ By not building allegiance with and taking support from the political parties and not letting the “opening of the parties’ flag in the protests,” the EMOs attempt to get the support of the ultimate “other” to achieve a radical transformation. Drawing attention to the “need of coming together,” an interviewee stated that “the only weapon we have is to raise awareness of the people and, in this way, to build a collective public opposition”⁸⁰ (Interviewee 2). Through the achievement of the overarching public support that surpasses the pre-existing sociopolitical cleavages in the country, the EMOs try to prove that the fight they have been giving is objectively legitimate. Unlike conservationist CSOs investigated in this thesis, who uphold a high level of depoliticization, the EMOs upheld a new political discourse to be able to more effectively participate in governance processes and resist to the urban environmental degradation.

Since the EMOs also operates in a domestic context that is defined by uncertainties about the state’s attitude towards civil society activism and by exclusionary hegemonic discourse. So, there are certain limits on their level of politicization, as well. Though, still, this chapter shows that through the use of informality and horizontalism, they can more actively employ public activism and can generate and promote more rigorously the counter-hegemonic environmentalist

⁷⁹ Translated from: “karşı tarafın da destekleyebileceği”

⁸⁰ Translated from: “Bizim tek silahımız insanların farkındalığını arttırmak ve böylelikle toplu bir toplumsal muhalefet oluşturmak.”

discourse. Undoubtedly, the choice over informality brings along considerable costs, such as a higher level of police surveillance of the activities and a high number of custodies and lawsuits that the members of the EMOs encounter. Thus, this chapter has attempted to intuitively answer the question of what makes these people choose to organize in EMOs, instead of CSOs, if the costs associated with informality is high. The answer that I provide, here, is that the costs of participation through formal institutions have also increased considerably in the last decade, which, in the end, diminished the relative costs of more contentious forms of political participation.



CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Istanbul has experienced an abrupt transformation within a decade with top-down neoliberal urbanization policies and aggressive urban expansion projects. This showed us that the megaprojects in question were part of a greater neoliberalization process in the city, which had already led to contentious dynamics. The Gezi events in the summer of 2013 show the prevalence of the public dissent towards the neoliberalization process, the radical urban and environmental transformation, and top-down policy-making processes in the city. Despite the widespread protests, the processes leading to the Third Bridge and North Marmara Highway projects, Third Airport project, and Canal Istanbul projects have been accelerated after 2013. Neither the public dissent nor the incompatibility of these plans with the 2009 Master plan of Istanbul could impede the projects. The environmental CSOs, even if they have public support and legal basis for objecting to the plans, could not effectively participate in the policy-making processes.

In this thesis, I addressed the question of how and why the modes and limits of civil society participation in the urban environmental governance of Istanbul have changed between 2009 and 2019. In order to answer this question, I focused on the decision-making and implementation processes of three megaprojects that are located in the Northern Forests of Istanbul with special attention on the civil society actors' experiences in these processes. In contrast to the theoretical discussions which portray effective civil society participation as the nearly natural outcome of the neoliberalization of environmental governance, I proposed that the civil society actors' embeddedness into the state structures significantly obstruct their

participatory prospects. The detrimental effect of this embeddedness on the environmental civil society actors' attempts to participate is observed through the disclosure of the weaknesses of formal institutions of participation.

I argued that the weak participatory mechanisms have served to limit the civil society participation to *post-facto* one-way information sharing and pseudo-meetings. The experiences of conservationist CSOs and radical environmentalist CSOs gradually converged to the detriment of the long-lasting “divided environment” and any form of formal civil society participation (Lust-Okar, 2004). Furthermore, I diagnosed that the weaknesses of formal institutions of participation have substantially altered the civil society actors' incentives to participate in urban environmental governance of Istanbul through formal institutions due to the increasing uncertainty about the effectiveness and cost of participation. Hence, this thesis shows that, in weak institutional environments, contentious modes of political participation, such as direct action and unauthorized protests, become more appealing (Machado et al., 2011; Moseley, 2018).

The literature on neoliberal environmental governance, civil society, and weak institutions have provided me with a comprehensive theoretical framework to analyze this multifaceted transformation. First of all, I investigated the relative role of the state and civil society in the environmental governance of Turkey, which is mainly characterized by limited decentralization and the patterns of selective inclusion for the CSOs. Though, this limited decentralization in environmental governance is accompanied by the recentralization of the urban governance processes with the advancement of administrative centralization and deregulation of urban planning processes and development controls. This paradoxical coexistence of decentralization and recentralization in urban environmental governance of Turkey

greatly challenges the fundamental assumptions of the neoliberal environmental governance literature. Hence, the environmental CSOs have faced novel difficulties in trying to participate in the decision-making processes of the megaprojects that could potentially have detrimental effects on the last remaining forestry areas of the city. As I investigated the decision-making and implementation processes of these megaprojects, it has become clear that the state has a pivotal role in environmental governance since it actively decides how and to what extent the developmental interests would be mediated with the environmental interests. Hence, the AKP government employed a considerably exclusionary developmentalist discourse and blamed any environmentalist critique of the projects accordingly.

The nascent literature on the civil society in non-democratic countries has encouraged me to focus on the self-organization function and counter-hegemonic discursive functions of the CSOs. The environmental civil society had become a potential platform for the generation and promotion of counter-hegemonic environmentalist discourse once it became clear that even the conservationist CSOs strictly opposes these megaprojects. The extent of the possible environmental degradation in the last remaining forestry areas of the city has encouraged all the CSOs to employ counter-hegemonic discourse, which has considerably changed the experiences of CSOs at the expense of the divided environment. The categorizations that is made for a long time between those included and excluded in civil society has become obsolete when the state denies any form of participation to the top-down megaprojects even only for the image of inclusion. Even though, in this thesis, I have investigated the experiences and strategies of CSOs in two groups, it has become clear that the boundaries in civil society about who would be included and who would be excluded could not be predetermined based on some historical, structural

and strategic characteristics of the CSOs. Instead, this case study shows that all environment CSOs experienced great administrative, bureaucratic and legal gridlocks when the state does not seek the image of inclusion and participation but instead pursues legitimacy to its projects through exclusionary developmentalist discourse and creation of alternative public spaces. The changing attitude of the state towards civil society participation has wiped out the arguments on the divided environment and showed how fluid is the boundaries between categorizations such as included and excluded or moderate and radical.

It has become clear that the so-called conservationist CSOs could function as a venue for the generation and promotion of counter-hegemonic discourses. The reports written by the conservationist CSOs put forth considerable critiques of the developmentalist hegemonic discourse as well as the top-down policy-making processes. The so-called radical environmentalist CSOs have more extensively used legal participation mechanisms and authorized public activism. Like report-writing, legal participation mechanisms have also greatly served to the expansion of the public sphere for the discussion and promotion of the counter-hegemonic environmentalist discourse. Though, the legal participation mechanisms have suffered significant institutional weaknesses as I summarized the procrastination of the trial processes and low implementation problems. Thus, the uncertainties about the outcomes and costs of trying to participate in the decision-making processes of these megaprojects through the legal mechanisms considerably increased for CSOs during this period. Likewise, the strategy of public activism has also suffered from the increasing uncertainty and costs associated with this.

I have diagnosed that these increasing uncertainties and costs in the formal participation mechanisms had an unintended consequence on civil society. After the

Gezi events, many social movement organizations have emerged in Istanbul, which defines themselves as “defenses.” The main concerns of these defenses were the protection of the urban fabric and the environment of the city as opposed to various urban transformation projects and megaprojects. I found out that these organizations have strictly endorsed informality as a tool for avoiding the increasing costs and uncertainties associated with formal participation mechanisms. Hence, in analyzing this phenomenon, I ground my analyses on the nascent literature investigating the effects of formal institutional constraints on informal mobilization.

Altan-Olcay and İçduygu (2012) and Paker et al. (2013) have already referred to the emergence of alternative channels as a potential outcome of the increasing limitations on formal civil society actors. Though, the paths to these alternative channels remain mostly abstract in most of the studies of civil society. Boulding (2014) refers to how the gridlocks experienced by the CSOs in countries with a low level of political institutionalization may intentionally or unintentionally encourage more contentious types of participation. Hence, this thesis shows that the environmental CSOs functioned as service providers and transit-points to the informal EMOs in various ways. Firstly, I scrutinize how the acknowledgment of the increasing limitations on the formal participation and the increasing associative activity has unintentionally made the CSOs a transit-points to informal EMOs. Secondly, I mentioned the crucial role attributed to the EMOs by the radical environmentalist CSOs. Thus, I argued, radical environmentalist CSOs unofficially support EMOs also by providing information, funding, and meeting places.

I believe such pathways are essential to show the dynamic and fluid boundaries between formal political participation and more contentious forms of political participation. This study is an attempt to show how civil society actors

constantly chooses over the modes of political participation that they will pursue. These choices are greatly context-driven and a result of the embeddedness of civil society into the state structures. So, it is vital to acknowledge the factors that may have an effect on the strategic calculations of the civil society actors over the modes of participation and mobilization. This study shows that the weak institutional arrangements that increase the uncertainty over the possible outcomes and costs of participation for civil society actors are certainly one of these factors.

To put it in a nutshell, I argue that the decision-making and implementation processes of the megaprojects located in the last remaining forestry areas of Istanbul reveals that the divided environment has gradually wiped out to the detriment of any form of effective formal civil society participation. The widely debated legitimacy-provision role of the civil society in non-democratic countries seems to be desirable in some cases while dispensable in other cases. Hence, this case shows that the hegemonic developmentalist discourse may seek to generate legitimacy, not through inclusion and participation but through exclusion. In such situations, the CSOs greatly suffer from this changing situation since they are embedded in the state structures that are characterized by crucial weaknesses. As I outlined above, this case study further shows that the increasing formal institutional constraints encourage informal mobilization to afford by civil society actors to avoid the costs associated with formality. This thesis ultimately points out the precarious status of the environmental CSOs in non-democratic countries particularly when it comes to the over-presence of the state, severe limitations of public activism and participation. Hence, it shows that no matter how the civil society actors navigate their strategies and discourses, civil society participation occurs on the terms of the state.

Even though the arguments mentioned above are investigated thoroughly in this thesis, this study has several limitations that hinder reaching generalizable conclusions. First of all, there is a lack of data about civil society participation in the documents and plans investigated in this thesis. For example, in the report of the 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul, it is written that the plan was written with a participatory perspective. Though, there is no mention to any CSOs that have actually contributed to the plans. This issue is repetitively raised by the interviewees as well when they mention the pseudo-meetings. They argued that these meetings are held to be able to say that the plan, projects, document, etc. have been prepared with the participation of the CSOs. Hence, this diminishes the incentives to participate and increases the mistrust towards formal mechanisms of participation. Secondly, the sampling of this study is not diverse enough to reach a generalizable conclusion about all the CSOs and EMOs in Turkey. Still, these limitations do not prevent this research from drawing sound findings. Hence, the findings of this thesis on the central role of the state in environmental governance and the effect of weak institutional arrangements on the modes and limits of civil society participation can considerably contribute to the theoretical discussions by providing data for building more generalizable models afterward.

This within-case study paves the way for further research by revealing a novel mechanism between the state, civil society organizations, and social movements. By using the insights of this study, cross-country comparisons can be made to investigate how the state and civil society tries to mediate developmental and environmental interests in the developing world. Moreover, the relationship established between weak institutions and contentious modes of participation should be elaborated by further research through the use of comparative or statistical

methods. Furthermore, although this thesis did not question the availability of the market-based solutions to the environmental problems, the neoliberal environmental governance literature repetitively touches upon this issue. Though, this case study showed that the incentives for economic development can sometimes strictly contradict environmental interests and could create irreversible environmental degradation.

Further research can be conducted on the question of when and to what extent the market actors can mediate the developmental interests with environmental interests. Lastly, I mentioned the fact that the environmental issues may also create a conflict within the state institutions considering that the environmental policies and programs are mostly built on top of the pre-existing social, political, and economic arrangements with specific imperatives such as neoliberal development and security. These dynamics are also important to reveal to be able to understand better the states' attempts to mediate these diverse imperatives.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW INFORMATION

Interview ID	Interviewee	Format	Date	Length
Interview 1	Social Movement Member	Conducted in person	02.10.2018	35 mins
Interview 2	Social Movement Member	Conducted in person	06.10.2018	65 mins
Interview 3	Social Movement Member	Conducted in person	18.11.2018	40 mins
Interview 4	Social Movement Member	Conducted in person	20.12.2018	30 mins
Interview 5	CSO Representative	Conducted in person	08.01.2019	45 mins
Interview 6	CSO Representative	Conducted in person	09.04.2019	30 mins
Interview 7	CSO Representative	Conducted in person	17.05.2019	45 mins
Interview 8	Social Movement Member	Conducted in person	22.05.2019	75 mins
Interview 9	Social Movement Member & Former CSO Representative	Conducted in person	10.06.2019	60 mins
Interview 10	CSO Representative	Conducted in person	14.06.2019	30 mins
Interview 11	Social Movement Member	Conducted in person	18.06.2019	90 mins
Interview 12	Social Movement Member & Former CSO Representative	Conducted in person	18.06.2019	70 mins
Interview 13	CSO Representative	Conducted in person	27.08.2019	60 mins
Interview 14	Official	Conducted in person	06.09.2019	25 mins
Interview 15	CSO Representative	Conducted in person	17.09.2019	30 mins

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

For the First Sub-Category

1. First, can you introduce yourself?
2. Can you introduce the CSO that you are working for? What are your goals?
3. Do you think the CSO that you work in is successful in achieving its aims?
4. How could you define the current state of the environment in Istanbul? What are the problems, if any?
5. What are the causes of these problems?
6. What kind of difficulties do you experience when trying to target these problems and the official goals of the organization?
7. Who do you collaborate with when trying to achieve your goals?
 - a. How is your relationship with the public institutions?
 - b. How is your relationship with other environmental CSOs operating in Istanbul?
 - c. How is your relationship with the informal environmental social movements in Istanbul?
8. Have you ever been in a position that confronts with the position of the state authorities?
 - a. If yes: What was your preferred course of action after that event?
9. Have you been part of the 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul? Do you know its content?
10. Does the CSO you work for have a formally stated position towards the urban expansion of Istanbul towards the Northern parts of the city?
 - a. If yes: Can you summarize it?

11. What do you think about the effectiveness of environmental CSOs in Istanbul?
12. What do you think about the participatory prospects of environmental CSOs in the urban environmental governance of Istanbul?
13. What is your and your organization's opinion on environmental social movements?
14. Are they effective? What are their limits and prospects?
15. What do you think about the future of the city?

For the Second Sub-Category

1. First, can you introduce yourself?
2. Can you introduce the CSO that you are working for? What are your goals?
3. Do you think the CSO that you work in is successful in achieving its aims?
4. How could you define the current state of the environment in Istanbul? What are the problems, if any?
5. What are the causes of these problems?
6. What kind of difficulties do you experience when trying to target these problems and the official goals of the organization?
7. Who do you collaborate with when trying to achieve your goals?
8. How is your relationship with the public institutions?
9. Have you ever been in a position that confronts with the position of the state authorities?
 - a. If yes: What was your preferred course of action after that event?
10. What do you think about your limitations and prospects on participation in the urban environmental decision-making and governance processes?
11. Have you been part of the 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul? Do you know its content?

12. Does the CSO you work for have a formally stated position towards the urban expansion of Istanbul towards the Northern parts of the city?
 - a. If yes: Can you summarize it?
13. How is your relationship with other environmental CSOs operating in Istanbul?
14. What do you think about the effectiveness of environmental CSOs in Istanbul?
15. How is your relationship with the informal environmental social movements in Istanbul?
16. Why have these social movements emerged?
17. What do you think about their effectiveness?
18. What do you think about the future of the city?

For the Third Sub-Category

1. First, can you introduce yourself?
2. Can you introduce the social movement you are a member of?
3. Do you think this social movement is successful in achieving its aims?
4. Who do you collaborate with when trying to achieve your goals?
5. How could you define the current state of the environment in Istanbul? What are the problems, if any?
6. What are the causes of these problems?
7. What kind of difficulties social movement experiences when trying to target these problems?
8. Are you in touch with any public institution?
 - a. If yes: Can you give examples?
 - b. Are you in touch with IBB?
9. Do you try to influence the policies of the state and public institutions?
 - a. If yes: What are your strategies?

10. Have you ever been in a position that confronts with the position of the state authorities?
 - a. If yes: What was your preferred course of action after that event?
11. Have you ever confronted with the police?
 - a. If yes: what kind of police response or intervention have you experienced?
12. What do you think about your limitations and prospects on participation in the urban environmental decision-making and governance processes?
13. Why urban and environmental social movements flourished in Istanbul in the last decade?
14. What are these urban environmental social movements prospects and limitations?
15. Do you know the content of the 2009 Master Plan of Istanbul?
 - a. If yes: what do you think about its content and its implementation?
16. Does the social movement you are a member of has a position towards the urban expansion of Istanbul towards the Northern parts of the city?
 - a. If yes: Can you summarize it?
17. How is your relationship with environmental CSOs operating in Istanbul?
18. What do you think about the effectiveness of environmental CSOs in Istanbul?
19. What do you think about the future of the city?

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