

**LOCATING THE DERGAH IN CIVIL SOCIETY: THE ALEVI YOUTH'S
COUNTER PUBLIC AND CIVILITY**

**by
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COUNTER PUBLIC AND CIVILITY**

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ABSTRACT

The fundamental objective of this thesis is to question the legitimacy of the prevalent assumptions of civil society with regard to who should constitute civil society and how the the experiences of the underprivileged are to be addressed through a scrutiny of micro social processes of power at the community level in a particular space. It is thus through an in-depth-analysis of informal youth activism within a politics of place- its dynamics, complexities, interactions, contestations, and normative orientations- that I have endeavored to show a possibility of context-specific patterns of civil society. The thesis is particularly concerned with unveiling some of the dynamics shaping the forms of public communication within the emergent autonomous space of the Alevi youth in the Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı via the modalities of counter public. It is the argument of this thesis that the Şahkulu youth has successfully constructed a counter public within the Dergah to formulate their oppositional interpretations of Alevi identity and their grievances with regard to the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by the people in power position while simultaneously constructing itself as an embryonic counter public vis-a-vis the general Alevi counter public. It has also built such a capacity of civility that epitomizes how-to-coexist with differences in a culturally diverse society as such.

DERGAHI SİVİL TOPLUM BAĞLAMINDA DÜŞÜNMEK: ALEVİ GENÇLERİN KARŞI KAMUSAL ALANI VE SİVİLLİĞİ

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ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, sivil toplumu hangi grupların oluşturması gerektiği ve toplumdaki dezavantajlı grupların deneyimlerinin sivil toplum bağlamında nasıl ele alınması gerektiğine ilişkin ortaya atılan hakim görüşlerin meşruiyetini sorgulamaktır. Bu doğrultuda, iktidarın mikro sosyal süreçlerdeki tezahürü belirli bir topluluk ve mekan ölçeğinde incelemeye tabi tutulacaktır. Bir mekan politikası bağlamında gelişen enformel gençlik aktivizminin-dinamikleri, giriftlikleri, etkileşimleri ve normatif yönelimleri- derinlemesine analizi aracılığıyla sivil toplumun farklı bağlamlarda tezahür edebilme imkanı bir saha çalışması aracılığıyla örneklendirilmeye çalışılacaktır. Bu çalışmayla özellikle amaçlanan Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı'nda gelişmekte olan gençliğin özerk alanını şekillendiren kamusal iletişim şekillerinin dinamiklerini karşı kamusal alan modalitesi aracılığıyla ortaya koymaktır. Bu tezin ortaya koyduğu temel argüman şudur: Şahkulu gençleri Dergah içerisinde hem kendi muhalif Alevilik yorumlarını formüle etmek hem de iktidar pozisyonundaki insanların dayandığı adil olmayan katılımsal ayrıcalıklara ilişkin memnuniyetsizliklerini ortaya koymak amacıyla karşı bir kamusal alan inşa etmişlerdir. Aynı zamanda genel Alevi toplumu içerisinde de embriyonik bir karşı kamusal alan oluşturma eğilimindedirler. Ayrıca, Türkiye gibi çok kültürlü bir toplumda farklılıkların nasıl birarada varolabileceğini örnekleyen bir sivillik kapasitesi geliştirmişlerdir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction of the Research Question

This thesis endeavours to challenge the dominant conceptions of civil society which endow students of civil society with "a particular western model as a universal template to be replicated around the world" regardless of the idiosyncrasies of diverse societies (Hann, 1996, p.19). The essential components underlying this vision are; i) its philosophical underpinnings and historical development are rooted in the Western trajectory (Hall, 1995, pp.3-7), ii) it is located within a culture of individualism which is vested in individuals disassociated from the "social cages" of primordial bonds (Hall, 1995, p.15), and iii) associational life is confined to the sphere of the visible, the formal, and the legal (Akman, 2012, p.322).

Owing to the various processes of modernisation, Western models of civil society have been imported across societies. Outside of western contexts, most analysis of civil society suffers from "a discrepancy between the theoretical definitions and the workings of civil society" (Singerman, 2006, p.2). White (1996, p.145) maintains that "The classical sense of civil society is little or no use in describing most of the non-western world below the level of government and the activities of a segment of educated westernised elites". In other words, certain organisations have been privileged so far; those that involve democratic values and institutions, the middle-classes, elite, male-dominated associations, and formal structures of civil society (Kopecky, 2003; White, 1996). Thus, the components of civil society outside the western world should be tuned to the culturally specific patterns of civil society.

This study assumes that alternative models of civil society can only be constructed by considering "the problems of accountability, trust and cooperation that all groups face" (Hann, 1996, p.19). This becomes possible only if students of civil society "focus on the function of civil society rather than specific structures" across different societies (Hudson cited in Schwedler, 1995, p.16). Considering this fact, this thesis rests on a re-conceptualisation of civil society on the basis of two constituents: the forms of public communication and the tolerance of differences.

Through an in-depth research, this thesis scrutinises micro social processes of power at community level within a politics of place, in order to question the legitimacy of the prevalent

assumptions of civil society with regard to who should constitute civil society and how the experiences of the underprivileged are to be addressed.

The thesis is particularly concerned with unveiling the dynamics shaping the forms of public communication within the emergent autonomous space of the Alevi youth in the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı* via the modalities of counter public, and combining them with an inquiry of their mode of interaction with the state, strangers, and in-group circles on the level of civility.

In this thesis, I argue that the *Şahkulu* youth has successfully constructed a counter public within the *Dergah* in order to formulate their oppositional interpretations of Alevi identity and their grievances, with regard to the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by people in a position of power, while simultaneously constructing itself as an embryonic counter public vis-à-vis the general Alevi counter public. It has also built a capacity of civility that epitomises how to coexist with differences in a culturally diverse society.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study contribute to the literature on civil society in a variety of ways. First of all, this study demonstrates that a culturally specific pattern of social relationships, the *Dergah*, might carry out the same functions as those of liberal models of civil society in other parts of the world; namely, organised forms of communication and the encouragement of tolerance of differences. Secondly, it shows that there is a need to shift the focus of studies from formal structures to informal structures, since, informally organised groups involve a great deal of civic activism as well. An informality-sensitive perspective will also help to unveil the associational capacity of the marginalised groups which are often precluded from engagement in formally institutionalised forms of participation due to their disadvantageous status arising from age, sex, class, and ethnicity. With regard to this, the category of age constitutes an important axis of exclusion in this study. Considering the underrepresentation of the youth in the study of various social movements in the Turkish context, the study also acknowledges that:

There is a need for in-depth ethnographic studies of young people of the post-1980 generation. There are still few studies of the Islamist, Kurdish nationalist, Alevi, Kurdish, neo-Kemalist, and Turkish nationalist movements from an age-based perspective, given that young people are disproportionately represented in these movements (Neyzi, 2001, p. 427).

Thirdly, the findings reveal that civil society associations do not necessarily function only to

countervail the state authority. Rather, they might have a function within the micro social processes of power at a community level in a particular space within a web of relationships among different social actors. Fourthly, activism among Alevi youth suggests that an ethos shaped around a communitarian culture might also prompt a good deal of civic engagement, without stifling the members as much as that which transpires within an ethos of an individualist culture. Finally, the relationship between the Alevi faith, despite not being considered a part of Islam by some, and civil society might bring a new dimension to the debates on the compatibility of Islam and civil society which has, to date, in the main, been discussed in the context of the Sunni Islam.

1.3. Methodological Issues and the Scope of the Thesis

This thesis should be interpreted as a space-opening study for a subject area which has not hitherto drawn the curiosity of scholars. It does not claim to reach conclusions which reflect all Alevis in general or all Alevi youth in particular. Rather, the focus of the study is limited to the space of the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı*. Yet, this study has some implications which go beyond the boundaries of the *Dergah*. For instance, the paper argues that *Şahkulu* Youth might have constructed an embryonic counter public vis-à-vis the wider Alevi counter public. To reach a definitive conclusion in this respect requires further investigation with regard to other youths in other spaces and their relationship with Alevis in power positions within these spaces. Such an investigation may demonstrate whether this form of youth activism is peculiar to the *Şahkulu* youth or whether there are other youths' spaces in a similar position. Thus, future researchers might examine whether it is possible to discern the emergence of an autonomous Alevi youth identity in the wider Alevi public.

This thesis endeavours to investigate any possibility of culturally specific patterns of civil society. It requires "shifting our focus to the informal structures, networks, beliefs, values, and everyday interpersonal practices" (Hann, 1996, p.13). Considering the nature of informal associations as "unlicensed, unregulated, and unenumerated by the state" (Singerman, 2006, p.2), social sciences' research methods, which are intended to measure civil society on the basis of organisational capacity, (possibly through quantitative methods or loosely involved qualitative methods) seem less able to help an exploration of the deeper dynamics of civil society. This task might only become possible through the anthropology of civil society. Thus, ethnography seems to become an ideal research instrument for fulfilling the objective of the study.

Before selecting the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı* as a field of study, the author visited several cemhouses in Istanbul (*Kartal Cemevi*, *Karacaahmet Cemevi*, *Yeni Bosna Cemevi*, and *Ok Meydanı*

Cemevi). The *Şahkulu* was selected on the basis that it differed from others in a variety of way. While others are modern constructions almost exclusively utilised in the performance of the *cem* ritual, the *Şahkulu* is a historical shrine and the cemhouse occupies only a small part of its overall functions. Considering this, the author rationalised that the *Şahkulu* might approximate more to an example of culturally specific pattern of civil society. Moreover, being one of the oldest Alevi centres of faith in Istanbul, the author assumed that it was disposed to reflect established patterns of social relationships and networks.

The total duration of participation-observation in the *Şahkulu* amounts approximately to seven months from November, 2011 to May, 2012. During this time the author was present in almost all the physical and cultural spaces within the *Dergah*: the *lokma* house, cemhouse, *Alevilik* lessons, thursday conversations, *semah* lessons, remembrance days of important figures, the Women Commission's weekly meetings, and the Youth Commission's weekly meetings. Entering the field was easier than expected; when it was known that the author was preparing a master's thesis, most people helped as a matter of course. It should be noted that, due to the similarity in ages of the author and the participants, contact with the members of the Youth Commission was straightforward; however, access to people in a position of power was more difficult, and might have led to the underrepresentation of their stances in the analysis.

Fieldwork observations are combined with the in-depth and semi-structured interviews which created a space for the respondents' narrative. Snow-ball sampling of young respondents was chosen for the interview process. Four of the interviewees were active participants of the Youth Commission. Particular attention was paid to ensure the involvement of the less experienced juniors along with the more experienced seniors. The sample also included one interviewee who was a former youth member who broke off relations with the Commission owing to disagreements. The rationale being that it might be helpful to hear the voice of an internal dissident in order to understand the internal power relations within the Commission. The other four people are, in turn, the *Dede*, the manager, the head of the Women's Commission, and the newly-youth-sponsored head of the *Dergah*. Although it would have been instructive to interview the former head of the *Dergah*, who received much criticism from the members of the Youth Commission, the author was unable to contact him despite e-mails and phone calls.

The subject matter of this study is not *Alevilik*. Rather, the *Şahkulu* youth constitutes the subject matter of the study. For this reason, the author never endeavoured to define and draw a boundary of the *Alevilik*. Furthermore, the paper does not rely on one sole interpretation of identity.

However, there are some points which require examining the respondents' perception of identity. For instance, the youth's discursive space diverges from the comprehensive Alevi public with regard to their oppositional interpretation of identity. At this point, the respondents were asked how they define the *Alevilik*. Considering Geertz's definition of religion as "a cultural system", the questions were not prepared in order to uncover theological conceptions of faith, but rather, were designed to discern the youths' interpretation of faith on their daily life practices. Furthermore, a similar attitude was embraced in framing the status of the space, the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı*. The author did not ascribe a definition to the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı*, either as a cemevi or a culture house; instead, the respondents were asked how they view the Dergah.

1.4. Organisation of the Thesis

There are several critical tasks that this study (through seven chapters) will undertake in order to elucidate the construction of the Alevi youth's counter public and its mode of interaction with differences in society. Having introduced the research question, its significance, and methodology in this chapter, the second chapter attempts to gain fundamental insights into the historical and philosophical development of the concept of civil society, its usage in contemporary debates, and its shortcomings, particularly through its importation to the non-western world. The third chapter provides further background information on contemporary debates in Alevi community and defines the context of the research's micro-space. Chapter four aims at constructing an alternative criteria to explore civil society structures across the world to which are not predicated on a Euro-centric concept. The fifth chapter endeavours to unveil some of the dynamics shaping the forms of public communication within the emergent autonomous space of the Alevi youth in the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı* via the modalities of the counter public. Chapter six combines this analysis with an inquiry into the youth's mode of interaction with the state, its members and strangers on the level of civility. Finally, the paper concludes with analysis of the implications of the informal activism of the Alevi youth for civil society debates in Turkey and raises some questions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Origins of Civil Society in Western Political Thought

The conceptual history of civil society can be traced back to Greek political philosophy like many other concepts of political thought. Yet, in its contemporary meaning, the concept of civil society has begun to develop in early modern period (Kaldor, 2002, p.3).

Historical developments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries- the commercialization of land, labor, and capital, the growth of market economies, the age of discoveries, and the English and later North American and continental revolutions- put pressure on the legitimacy of the existing beliefs on the social order (Seligman, 2002, p.14). "Within this major and radical reorientation of European social thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries", "the image of civil society as an ethical model" began to appear as an alternative source of social order (Seligman, 2002, p.15). Seligman perceives it as:

a critical new attempt to argue the moral sources of the social order from within the human world and without recourse to an external or transcendent referent. This challenge and, with it, that of squaring the newly emerging interests of increasingly autonomous individuals with some vision of the public good provided the theoretical and ethical ground for the idea of civil society (p.15).

Kaldor comments that the idea of civil society has always been related to "the formation of a particular type of political authority" (2003, p.1). In this respect, civil society in the early modern period was put into use in the intellectual idiom to characterize the new forms of political authority in the transition from absolutist monarchies to the modern state (Kaldor, 2003, p.1).

The views of John Locke among the eighteenth century political thinkers are of particular importance in reflecting this association between civil society and political authority. In Locke's conception like the other political thinkers of the early modern era, the idea of individual rights and social contract lie at the center of the notion of civil society (Seligman, 2002). In this view, civil society corresponds to "a type of state characterized by a social contract" or "a society governed by laws, based on the principle of equality before the law, in which everyone was subject to the law; in other words, a social contract agreed among the individual members of society" (Kaldor, 2003, p.584). That's to say, civil society is not viewed as a distinct entity from the political society or state

(Khilhani, 2001, p.18). Rather, it is distinguished from the "non-civil societies" like state of nature or absolutist monarchies (Kaldor, 2003, p.7).

This brings us to another layer of civil society which came into prominence in Locke's stance. This is the image of civil society as "a zone of civility" (Kaldor, 2003, p.7). Accordingly, the members of civil society are supposed to "act in a civilized way towards each other, treating each other with mutual respect, tolerance, and confidence" (Kaldor, 2003, p.3). In other words, violence ceases to be seen as a legitimate way of settling disputes among individuals.

Although Locke was the first who saw the idea of private property as an important component of civil society, it was the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, particularly Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, who associated the development of market economy with civil society (Ehrenberg, 1999, p.96). That's to say, the thinkers of the "commercial society" believed that markets create individuals and individuals become bearers of civil society (Kaldor, 2003, p.7; Seligman, 1992, p.26).

In this tradition, civil society is viewed as "the public arena of exchange and interaction" (Seligman, 2002, p.18). However, the workings of this realm are not governed by merely dictates of utility and rational self-interest. Rather, this is "a realm of solidarity held together by the force of moral sentiments and natural affections" (Seligman, 2002, p.19). This image of civil society as an ethical vision embraces a particular understanding of reason which does not deny the idea of self-interest and but also does not neglect the idea of "putting the public or social good above our individual interests" (Seligman, 2002, p.20). Seligman considers the contributions of the Scottish thinkers as "an attempt to find or, rather, posit a synthesis between a number of developing oppositions...between the individual and the social, the private and the public, egotism and altruism, as well as between a life governed by reason and one governed by the passions" (Seligman, 2002, p.16).

The views of the Scottish political economists had a strong impact in shaping Hegel's conception of civil society (Kaldor, 2003, p.7). Cohen and Arato assert that the concept of civil society turned into "a theory of a highly differentiated and complex order" at the hands of Hegel (1994, p.91). With Hegel, the concept acquires an autonomous sphere as distinct from the political society. Hegel defines civil society as "the realm of difference, intermediate between the family and the state" (Kaldor, 2002, p.4). In other words, Hegel's model of civil society involves markets. That's why he called it as "the bourgeois society' (*Bürgerliche Gesellschaft*)" (Kaldor, 2002, p.4).

However, the market economy is only one among a plethora of actors performing in civil society. Thus, Hegel perceives of civil society as:

the achievement of the modern world...the territory of mediation where there is free play for every idiosyncrasy, every talent, every accident of birth and fortune, and where waves of passion gush forth, regulated only by reason, glinting through them (as cited in Kaldor, 2002, p.4)

With Hegel the concept of civil society goes through a transformation in several respects (Seligman, 2002, p. 50). At first, Hegel views civil society as "an object of historical development" rather than a "metahistorical reality in which one can seek a normative order beyond the exigencies of history" (Seligman, 2002, p.50). Secondly, Hegel considers civil society as a realm of mutually conflicting interests. To Hegel, the main tension in civil society is that different groups in civil society cannot overcome their particularized interests. The resultant conflict is unavoidable and has a potential to disrupt the bonds of civil society ultimately (Seligman, 2002, p.50). Finally, as opposed to the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment who locate the ideal of reconciling the particular and the universal in civil society, it ceases to be seen as the sphere of ethical realization in Hegel's thought. Instead, state is the proper realm of ethical realization (Seligman, 2002, p.50).

Grounded on the Hegelian conception of civil society, Karl Marx interpreted the concept in the context of the class relations of capitalist mode of production (Schwedler, 1995, p.4). The following passage is important in exemplifying the economism of Marxist vision (Kaldor, 2003, p.584). Marx viewed civil society as:

the theater of history...civil society embraces all the material relations of individuals within a definite stage of the development of productive forces. It embraces the whole commercial and industrial life of a given stage (as cited in Kaldor, 2003)

Marx viewed the bourgeois notion of civil society as a tool for "the consolidation of capitalist class interests behind ideological claims of reason and universality" (Woods, 1992, p.81). Following Hegel's thoughts, Marx did not believe that civil society is a sphere where the ethical realization of conflicting particular interests can be reconciled. Yet, as different from Hegel, state can not become the realm of ethical realization because state is itself representative of bourgeois interests in Marx's thought (Seligman, 2002, p.26). Therefore, with Hegel and Marx, the classic idea of civil society comes to an end (Seligman, 2002, p.27).

When it comes to the twentieth century, Antonio Gramsci made a decisive break within the Marxist school of civil society. Civil society in Gramsci does not reside in the structural sphere as does in Marx's vision, but in the super-structural sphere (Bobbio, 1998, p.82). That's to say, civil

society has an autonomous domain from both the state and the economy. Family is also considered as a part of civil society as distinct from liberalism (Chambers, 2002, p.90). Specifically, In Gramsci,

civil society...comprises families and all private institutions whether religious, cultural, or economic, but also political parties, labor unions, and all forms of organization and resistance of the exploited classes (as cited in Singerman, 2006, p.5)

In Gramsci's thought, the image of civil society as "a system of needs understood in primarily economic terms " is replaced by an image of civil society "as a system of ideas, values, ideologies, and interests understood primarily in sociological and political terms" (Chambers, 2002, p.91). The pivotal concept in this vision of civil society is the term *hegemony*. Gramsci offered the term *hegemony* as an answer to the question of "Why are the masses not revolutionary?" (Chambers, 2002, p.90). That's to say, the bourgeois society formed strong norms and institutions to consolidate their hegemony, grounded on the consent of the working classes (Singerman, 2006, pp.5-6). Yet, this sphere of sociocultural struggle is open to all actors (Singerman, 2006, p.6). The exploited classes may organize themselves to overcome the bourgeois domination by developing their counter-hegemony.

The configuration of civil society in Gramsci as "the realm of culture, ideology and political debate" (Kaldor, 2003, p.584) have influenced the students of critical theory in their conception of civil society as a "sphere of identity formation, social integration, and cultural reproduction" (Chambers, 2002, p.91).

2.2. The Idea of Civil Society in Western Historical Development

Many scholars have argued that the idea of civil society as "an existing social or historical reality" (Seligman, 1995, p.4) has its origins in Western historical development (Hall, 1995; Mardin, 1995). Şerif Mardin, who calls civil society as "a Western dream", conceives it as a product of certain transformations in the social history of Western Europe. In tracing the deepest moorings of the concept in this history, Mardin focuses on particularly the history of medieval Western town. In his view, it is of central importance because "each one of the thresholds of this history adds another characteristic layer to our present understanding of civil society as a concept" (Mardin,1995, p.280). In this regard, the study of medieval urban history reveals the fact that the idea of "autonomous, secular collectives with legal personality operating within a frame of rationalized self-referential law" began to develop in that epoch of the Western history (Mardin, 1995, p.278).

Grounded on this background of the medieval town, civil society in Western Europe emerged as a result of a process of differentiation in the eighteenth-century (Woods, 1992, p.78). Habermas argues that the emergence of the bourgeoisie and the later efforts of this class had a direct impact in shaping the notion of civil society (as cited in Woods, 1992, p.79). The role of the bourgeoisie in this formation was to struggle against the domination of both the patrimonial state and the church. With regard to this, Poggi expresses:

A modern civil society began to appear in the 18th century with the decline of absolutism and the development of new normative assumptions about the separation of public/private spheres between state and society (as cited in Woods, 1992, p. 84).

Habermas asserts that civil society appeared as "the genuine domain of private autonomy [that] stood opposed to the state" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (as cited in Calhoun, 1996, p.7). Intellectual, scientific, and literary salons and coffeehouses played a crucial role as institutional bases of the emergent civil society (Calhoun, 1996, pp.10-12; Woods, 1992, pp. 78-79). These literary circles functioned as "explicitly political arenas in which attitudes about the arbitrary nature of monarchical authority were developed and criticized" (Woods, 1992, p.79).

At the heart of all the theoretical attempts presented insofar to formulate a notion of civil society lies "the problematic relation between the private and the public, the individual and the social, public ethics and individual interests, individual passions and public concerns" (Seligman, 1995, p.5). According to Seligman, "this dialectic between public and private" is an indispensable property of civil society (Seligman, 1995, p.5). Considering the interplay between these dualisms, the notion of civil society in the Western European tradition embraces a particular conception of the individual. This is an "autonomous, agentic, self-determining individuality" who is not devoted to the dictates of any external agent but only strives to fulfill his/her own autonomy (Seligman, 1995, p.5). To Seligman, the formation of the individual as the primary agent of civil society is buried in the background of the Western social history. Its roots originated from the "religious doctrines of sectarian or ascetic puritanism...whose roots were firmly tied to Reformation religion" (Seligman, 1995, p.6).

Gellner (1995) associates the emergence of the individual as a self-autonomous actor in society with the processes of the modern state formation and capitalism. The concept of "the modularity of man" is central in understanding Gellner's vision of civil society. The modular man

can combine into effective associations and institutions, without these being total, many-stranded, underwritten by ritual, and made stable through being linked to a whole set of relationships, all of these then being tied with each other and so immobilized (Gellner, 1995, p.41).

Modularity is a prerequisite for civil society (Gellner, 1995, p.42). The modular man cannot only face the despotism of political authority but also "escape social cages", imposed by primordial bonds (Hall, 1995, p.15). Thus, not every set of autonomous groups are conducive to the formation of civil society. Individualism is an essential component of civil society in Gellner's view (Hall, 1995, p. 15).

Yet, the possible dangers of individualism have become a serious concern for some scholars of civil society. One of such concerns has been that individualism in modern societies might arouse the feelings of privatism, apathy, atomism, and passivity which are ultimately likely to produce authoritarianism (Kaldor, 2003, p.15). Among the scholars sharing this concern, Tocqueville argues,

Around the issue of individualism will be seen to cluster certain propensities, which together give rise to what we may call the problem of democracy. These are the passion for well being and material comforts, a concern for one's private welfare to the exclusion of all consideration of public affairs, and an inevitable drift towards mediocrity. They make democratic man all too prone to accept or drift into a despotism securing him these pursuits or preferences (as cited in Kaldor, 2003, pp.15-16).

Tocqueville's suggestion to the problem of despotism based on atomism is to encourage the "re-emergence of public virtue". One effective way of doing this in Tocqueville is to incite the participation of individuals in the public sphere through associations or self-organizations (Woods, 1992, p.84).

2.3. 'Revival' of Civil Society: Contemporary Debates

In the last a few decades of the twentieth century, we have witnessed a revival of interest in the theme of civil society. Yet, the term has been employed to characterize very different sorts of groups in various societies. Mary Kaldor classifies the contemporary usages of the concept under three categories. These are the "activist version", "neo-liberal version", and "post-modern version" (Kaldor, 2003).

The "activist version" of civil society is used to characterize the new social movements which emerged after 1968 and the opposition movements of the 1970s and 1980s which simultaneously erupted against the military dictatorships in Latin America and against the totalitarian Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. The distinctive character of these social movements is to open up a space outside the domains of conventional politics in which people can deliberate and act in order to democratize the system (Kaldor, 2003, p.588).

The "neo-liberal version" of civil society involves non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, charities and voluntary organizations, comprising of the 'third sector', which have begun to emerge in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. Kaldor asserts that these organizations are "neither controlled by the state nor the market, but which play an essential role in facilitating the operation of both" (Kaldor, 2003, p.589). Specifically, they function as "a social safety net" against the failures of markets and governments (Kaldor, 2003, p.589).

Finally, the "post-modern version" of civil society is associated with the culturally specific patterns of engagement. The proponents of this vision, particularly social anthropologists, argue that instead of imposing western models of civil society on the societies which had gone through different social and historical trajectories, our formulations of civil society should pay attention to the alternative experiences of other societies across the world (Kaldor, 2003, p.590).

2.4. In Quest of Civil Society Beyond the 'West': Contemporary Debates in the Middle East

The Western political thought determines the ingredients in the much of meaning of the concept of civil society. The interplays among the various processes of Western historical development have given the form that civil society has taken currently. Yet, the concept has continued to spread across the societies which have completely distinct societal structures. It is not a secret that most of the societies in the world have been exposed to the modernization in a varying degree. However, societies continue to possess their traditional structures and value systems more or less. This leaves us with the question of to what extent it is appropriate to employ this concept in studying the societies whose socio-cultural structures and historical heritages show differences from the Western societies and to what extent it is legitimate to examine civil society in these societies in the same way we study in the 'West'.

Considering this puzzle, the Muslim societies of the Middle East have come out as the much debated case because Islam and Islamic societies have often been seen as the other side of modernity. In answering this puzzle, it is possible to identify three types of tendencies among the scholars studying civil society in the Middle East (Schwedler, 1995, pp.7-24). The first group of scholars are skeptical of any possibility of a civil society in the Middle East on the ground that Islam, traditionalism, and primordialism are of hindrance to the emergence of civil society in the region. The second group of scholars assert that the Middle East could be home to civil society; however, they are so much preoccupied with the Western models of civil society to the exclusion of indigenous experiences. Finally, the last group of scholars, who are a few in number, strive to shift

the axis of discussions from the euro-centric models towards context-specific experiences through ethnographic accounts.

The stances of the first group are imbued with the vestiges of Orientalism and modernization theory (Singerman, 2006, p.2). The marriage of modernization theory with Orientalism reflects itself on the thoughts of scholars in that " 'West' and the 'Orient' are conceived of as entities possessing internal homogeneity and external differences and, in many cases, properties opposite to those of the other" (Kamali, 2006, p.27). Hence, Islamic societies constitute the other side of modernity as the 'traditional', the 'premodern', and the 'others'. In other words, Islam and Islamic societies are viewed as the antithesis of capitalism, democracy (civil society), rationalism, and reason (Kamali, 2006, p.32). In keeping with this, Kedourie's thought is representative of this approach:

there is nothing in the political traditions of the Arab world-which are the political traditions of Islam-which might make familiar, or indeed intelligible, the organizing ideas of constitutional and representative government. The notion of state..., the notion of popular sovereignty..., the idea of representation, of elections, of popular suffrage, of political institutions being regulated by laws laid down by a parliamentary assembly,... of society being composed of a multitude of self-activating, autonomous groups and associations-all of these are profoundly alien to the Muslim political tradition(as cited in Schwedler, 1995, p.7).

Bernard Lewis also embraces a similar position:

Islamic history shows no councils or communes, no synods or parliaments, nor any other kind of elected or representative assembly....There was no point, since the need for a procedure of corporate collective decision never arose (as cited in Schwedler, 1995, p. 8).

The Orientalist stances of Islamic societies are endeavored to construct "an imagined Muslim world as a single, homogeneous reality" (Kamali, 2006, p.35) through selective interpretation of Islam over one particular theology with a frozen and timeless reading of Islam. The implication of this approach is to ignore cultural complexity of Islamic societies. With regard to this, Kamali points out (2006, p.35):

During the one and half millenia of its existence, Islam has passed through many theological reinterpretations and social reconstructions. The theological controversies over what it means to be a Muslim, how an Islamic society has to be shaped and how to run such a society began shortly after the death of the Prophet in 632 AD. The expansion of Islam as a religion into far reaching parts of Asia, Africa and Europe forced Muslim conquerors and missionaries to adjust Islam to the cultures of new societies, which included their religious traditions, histories and institutions. The mutual adjustment of Islam and the new societies helped to create very diverse societies in which the contextualized religion was just one of many properties that separated every single 'Islamic' society from the others.

Therefore, the empirical accounts which reveal not only external differences among various Islamic societies but also internal differences within the Islamic societies such as urban/rural, elite/popular, diverse religious and ethnic groups, and different socioeconomic and cultural classes raise questions about the legitimacy of such Orientalist perspectives (Kamali, 2006, p.35).

The ethnocentric understanding of the Middle Eastern societies leaves itself to a more cautious understanding at the hands of the second group of scholars (Norton, 1996). This genre of scholarship points out that authoritarianism is not an inherent property of the culture and tradition of the Middle Eastern societies but rather the political processes and struggles for power are responsible for the long standing tradition of authoritarianism in the region (Schwedler, 1995, p.9). Grounded on this argument, if the Muslim societies are experiencing relatively low levels of associational life, the responsibility of the governments cannot be neglected here.

A close scrutiny of the associational life in the region demonstrates that people have achieved creating autonomous spheres of deliberation and action despite the suppressive attempts of the autocratic governments (Norton, 1995, p.viii). Norton expresses, "the region is replete with voluntary organizations, trade unions, human rights groups, women's associations, minority rights groups, and various other social organizations" (as cited in Schwedler, 1995, p.10). Norton particularly refers to the women's movements in Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Yemen and the Palestinians; the businessmen's groups and professional associations in Jordan and Egypt; the diwanayat (meeting groups) in Kuwait; and the peace movement, labor unions and election-monitoring organizations of Lebanon (Norton, 1993, p. 209). Yet, this vision involves only particular types of associational groups. It confines the sphere of associational life to the sphere of the formal, the legal, and the visible. This exemplifies "the objectivist conception of civil society".

The proponents of the objectivist vision conceive of civil society as a "concrete and quantifiable" entity (Hann, 1996, p.16). In other words, civil society comprises of various associations whose organizational capacity (strength, size, structure, etc) is open to observation and measurement (Akman, 2012, p.322). Particularly, scholars in this genre of civil society investigate:

how many CSOs operate in a country, how many members they have, how effectively these members are mobilized, what issue areas these CSOs operate in and what resources they command (financial, political, cultural)...whether the membership is active or passive, due paying or not, multiple or single-issue oriented, etc (Akman, 2012, p.322).

The implication of employing the objectivist western models in the study of associational

life in the Middle East is the creation of a "discrepancy between theoretical definitions and the workings of civil society" (Singerman, 2006, p.2). Prioritizing a particular model, which is based on a value driven criteria, will become conducive to produce biased empirical findings (Kopecky, 2003, p.7). In particular, certain organizations have been privileged so far: those that embrace democratic values and institutions (Kopecky, 2003, p.11), middle-class or elite and male-dominated associations, and formal structures of civil society (White, 1996).

A number of scholars have commented on the various ways to diminish the gap between the empirical reality of the region and theoretical conceptions. In this context, Hudson argues:

Focusing on the function of civil society, rather than specific structures, one can ask, "What sort of groups in the Middle East-be they familial, professional, tribal, religious, clan-based, or whatever-fulfill the function of civil society?" How do citizens and communities address their interests or grievances vis-a-vis government policies? When the question is framed this way, the idea of civil society may highlight a wide range of social interactions that might otherwise be dismissed as irrelevant. In this sense, civil society indeed exists throughout the Middle East. Where civil society is weak, it is often the result of government oppression rather than deficiencies within the societies themselves (as cited in Schwedler, 1995, p.16).

By the same token, Hann reiterates that the attempts for "the replication of one particular western model around the world" is futile; rather, scholars should cease to view the Western experience as a universal template and turn "to the problems of accountability, trust and cooperation that all groups face" (1996, p.19).

This consideration requires us to scrutinize the culturally specific patterns of civil society. To this purpose, there is a need for shifting our focus to the informal structures, networks, beliefs, values, and everyday interpersonal practices (Hann, 1996, p.13). The concept of informality is of particular importance because the formal institutionalization is not a strong part of life in this part of the world. Informality refers to the state of being "unlicensed, unregulated, and unenumerated by the state" (Singerman, 2006, p.2). In other words, informal associations operate outside "the direct supervision and regulation of the laws regulating formal associations" (Singerman, 2006, p.17). In this context, research methods of the social sciences which are intended to measure civil society on the basis of organizational capacity are less likely to explore the deeper dynamics of civil society in the region. This task becomes only possible through an anthropology of civil society or other perspectives which are sensitive to the study of everyday interpersonal interactions. In this regard, Hann (1996, p.2) comments on this task:

the most obvious agenda for anthropological contributions to the civil society debates would be precisely to particularize and to make concrete: to show how an idea with its origins in European intellectual discourse has very different referents, varying

significantly even within European societies. This agenda would also be concerned with analogues to the discourse of civil society in non-European cultural traditions.

The following part is dedicated to an overview of some examples which may exemplify these culturally specific patterns.

CIVICUS Civil Society Index project is a worldwide research project whose primary task is to assess the state of civil society in countries around the world (TUSEV, 2011). Considering its assessment criteria which involve a distinguished focus on the organizational capacity, the CSI project exemplifies the "objectivist conception of civil society". The types of organizations which comply with the CSI criteria are those which are the formal, the legal, and the visible.

According to the 2011 CIVICUS Civil Society Index Analytical Report for Turkey, the levels of citizen participation are insufficient. In particular, there is one civil society organization for every 780 people in the country (TUSEV, 2011, p.18). The same report informs that young people under twenty-five, women, members of low income groups, and ethnic minorities are under-represented in civil society organizations (2011, p.19). How should we interpret these findings? Can we safely assume that the rest of the people do not participate? How should we understand the situation of those underprivileged people on the basis of class, sex, age, and various forms of subordinate identities, who could not get a chance to raise their voice through formally institutionalized channels?

Jenny White, a social anthropologist, opens a window into these questions on the basis of her ethnographic research at a working-class neighborhood of Istanbul, Umraniye, in the 1980s and 1990s. She argues that "The classical sense of civil society is little or no use in describing most of the non-western world below the level of government and the activities of a segment of educated westernized elites" (White, 1996, p.145).

White investigates how and why urban people in modern Turkey are mobilized around Islamic ideals. Her research encourages us to rethink "the terms we use to understand how people are mobilized to be active participants in public life" (White, 2002, p.x). The research interestingly shows us that voluntary association among the members of working class is not necessarily a product of contractual associations of unbounded individuals but rather it is a product of shared experiences, mutual trust, and the bonds of reciprocity among friends and neighbors. People learn citizenship skills through these informal reciprocal associations. In the long run, these forms of associations might produce, on the one hand, further institutionalization and politicization and, on

the other hand, a more participatory system and accountable governance (White, 1996; White, 2002).

A research which was conducted by the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies shows a similar picture of associational life in Egypt. Accordingly, there are seven informal associations for each formal one in Egypt (Singerman, 2006, p.12). Diane Singerman supports this account in her ethnographic research which had been conducted in the mid-1980s and 1990s on the politics of lower-income *sha'bi* communities at Cairo.

Singerman argues that the consideration of the place of family and informal networks is a must to capture an accurate understanding of the civil society in Egypt. The family and informal networks is the critical unit of societal organization to "organize and distribute scarce resources, facilitate coordinated actions, and promote public discourse" (2006, p.1).

It should be no coincidence that the Middle Eastern societies are replete with various forms of informal networks. Most of these networks carry out functions which could legitimately fall within the concerns of liberal model of associations in other parts of the world. Promoting intercultural communication in multicultural societies is an important function of associations. In this regard, Suad Joseph, a social anthropologist, provides us with an example of informal networks, which attempted to carry out this function, in her ethnography on the working-class women's networks in Camp Trad, a working-class neighborhood of Greater Beirut in the early 1970s.

Joseph (1983) observes that working-class women in Camp Trad created networks cutting across Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian, Christian, Muslim, and other national, religious, ethnic, and cultural affiliations. At the instrumental level, these networks helped to create solidarity among different groups of women in an economic sense. At the normative level, they contributed to the creation of a "unified, trans-sectarian, cross-ethnic identity and action at a politically turbulent point in time" (Joseph, 1983, p.2). Politically, inter-sectarian interactions of women challenged the political authority whose legitimacy was based on sectarianism. This research is also of importance to reveal an account of the women's experiences as opposed to the orientalist and sexist biases in the literature which frame the "Middle Eastern women as confined to their kin, tribal, ethnic, class, or national boundaries; as isolated from men; and as passive actors in the public domain" (Joseph, 1983, p.2).

Alternative forms of civic engagement are not unique to the non-Western societies, though. The Western societies have become home to the forms of participation which do not match well with the liberal models of civil society. Elizabeth Dunn, a social anthropologist, exemplifies this view in her ethnographic research on the American Mormons. Accordingly, American Mormons have developed a form of civil society that resembles the forms which might be seen in the non-Western societies although they are a part of a liberal-individualist society. Dunn argues, "through the practice of gifting, and its powers of social reproduction Mormons make a civil society which is not based on private individuals, but rather on a moral system of community interaction" (Dunn, 1996, p.26).

The consideration of these cases urges us to contemplate the implications of applying the Western models of civil society in examining the different societies. The researches, based on these models, underestimate the idiosyncrasies of different societies and, hence, the different possibilities of human experiences. Further to that, this perspective precludes an understanding of the experiences of the groups who lack power. In this regard, Fatton asserts, "By generally reflecting the lopsided balance of class, ethnic, and sexual powers, the [formal] organizations of civil society tend inevitably to privilege the privileged and marginalize the marginalized" (as cited in Singerman, 2006, p.13). Thus, the fact that some people do not have means to participate in the formal organizations due to the disadvantages of the class, sex, and minority status does not mean that they do not involve in organized action or forms of public communication in their own ways.

Thus, embracing a perspective which overcomes these biases in studying civil society burdens us with three tasks. To this purpose, an inclusive notion of civil society should look for the common principles governing human experiences around the common themes such as "the problems of accountability, trust, and cooperation that all groups face" (Hann, 1996, p.19). Yet, this notion of civil society should focus on functions rather than structures (Hudson as cited in Schwedler, 1995) because structures may take different forms in different societies. Finally, a broader understanding of civil society may require us to diversify the instruments of research. Particularly, ethnographic research might provide more insight to the study of everyday human interactions and informal structures rather than the research instruments such as quantitative methods or loosely involved qualitative techniques.

CHAPTER 3

SOME BACKGROUND ON *ALEVILIK*

3.1. The Rise of Alevi Identity

In the changing sociological and political landscape of Turkey, Alevi identity underwent a process of transformation in the 1990s. This process has been denominated in various ways: "process of rediscovery", "revitalization", "enlightenment", "innovation", "coming out", "revival", "remaking", "re-politicization", or even "the explosion of Alevism" (Erdemir, 2005, p.939). There are several dimensions to this process of transformation: a great number of publications on Alevi identity; a greater visibility in print, visual, and cyber media; the establishment of a great number of *cem*houses, associations, foundations, and federations throughout Turkey and Europe; increasing willingness of individuals to present themselves as Alevi and increasing participation in the Alevi organizations (Çamuroğlu, 1996, p.93; Erdemir, 2005, pp.939-940). Thus, the presence and visibility of the Alevi community in the public sphere has dramatically increased as a result of this process of transformation (Erdemir, 2005).

In terms of sociological transformation, various processes of modernization in Turkey such as migration to the cities, rapid urbanization, and the emergence of an Alevi bourgeoisie have paved the way for the "reawakening" of Alevi identity in the 1990s (Çamuroğlu, 1996, pp.94-95; Erman and Göker, 2006, pp.99-101). The political transformations of the 1990s both within Turkey and at the global scale proved to be a more propelling force in this "reawakening". During the ideological confrontation of the cold war, most Alevi subjects identified themselves with socialism. After the fall of the socialist block, the Alevi identity has emerged as an alternative for the politically disappointed Alevis who are in quest of a new identity (Çamuroğlu, 1996). In the 1990s, the rise of political Islam and the Kurdish question had a direct bearing on the emergent interest in Alevi identity. In the face of the rising tide of political Islam, the deep-rooted fear of the Sunni Islam urged the Alevi subjects to organize around the Alevi identity (Çamuroğlu, 1996, p.94). In the case of the Kurdish Alevis, the burden of the being a Kurd in that turbulent time was moderated by a turn towards the Alevi identity (Erman and Göker, 2006, p.100).

3.2. Defining Alevism

With the "rediscovery" of Alevi identity, the Alevi subjects have begun to redefine what is

"true Alevism" or not. Yet, these discussions have created an "image of a chaotic Alevism" because very diverse political and religious orientations in the Alevi community have claimed that their definition reflects the essence of Alevism better than any other definition does (Çamuroğlu, 1996, p. 95). Faruk Bilici (1996) identifies four main schools within the debates on the redefinition of Alevism: *Center-Alevism*, *Alevism as a 'Liberation Theology'*, *Mystical Islamic Alevism*, and *Shii-inclined Alevism* (pp.59-60). Each school has been represented on an institutional basis and the definitions of each school are not immune from the political orientations of the members of these organizations.

Center-Alevism has been voiced by the Cem Vakfi, which is economically and politically the most powerful Alevi organization and the most popular among the Alevi subjects (Bilici, 1996; Erman and Göker). This school views Alevism as a part of Islam, which is "a secularized version of Islam"(Erman and Göker, 2006). The proponents of this school strive to establish Alevism as an institutionalized religion. To this purpose, their political efforts are intended to force the state authorities to ensure the Alevi representation within the Directorate of Religious Affairs and equal financial support for the affairs of Alevi community as opposed to the other Alevi organisations that support the total eradication of the Directorate of Religious Affairs on the basis of the principle of secularism. The proponents of this school politically espouse Kemalism, the Republican regime, and Social Democratic policies (Erman and Göker, 2006, pp.111-112).

Alevism as a 'Liberation Theology' is the second most powerful school within the Alevi community, voiced by the former left-leaning intellectuals, in the circle of the Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Associations (Erman and Göker, 2006, p.110). The two most distinctive characteristics of this group are their construction of Alevism as "a type of Marxist-Alevi theology" that resembles to the liberation theology of the 1970s and 80s in Latin America and a syncretic understanding of Alevism (Bilici, 1996). The following passage summarizes the vision of this school:

The way of life of the Alevi in Turkey resembles the way of life in no other Islamic country. It resembles neither the Shi'a of Arabia and Iran, nor of Libya and Egypt. Anatolian Alevism displays a quite individual structure, having adopted an Alevite form after coming under the influence of all the various cultures that had previously existed in the region. Of these may be mentioned Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam. Nevertheless, it has fused with none of these... It is a movement which, in struggles between the oppressors and the oppressed, has always sided with the latter... Alevism is situated neither totally within nor totally outside the religion of Islam (as cited in Bilici, p.60).

The influence of other two schools among the Alevi subjects is insignificant. While the *Shii-inclined Alevism* is highly influenced by the Iranian Shiism, the *Mystical Islamic Alevism* is

distinguished by its overemphasis on the principles of the Sufi tradition (Erman and Göker, 2006).

Therefore, considering a plethora of interpretations, it can be safely argued that the interpretation of Alevism is not a monolithic entity (Okan, 2004). As Erman and Göker (2006) point out, "within Alevi politics, different groups constantly produce definitions both for "other" Alevilik(s) and for themselves, trying to establish a monopoly over the right definition" (p.113).

3.3.The Construction of Cemhouses

One of the the most visible signs of the Alevi "revival" in the public sphere has been the construction of cemhouses. Cemhouses simply refer to the places where the cem ritual of Alevism is performed. Historically, the cem ritual was mostly performed in the houses of dedes or one of the community members whose place was available to host the village population or open air spaces (Es, 2006, pp.9-10). The configuration of a special place for the performance of the cem ritual is rather a new phenomenon. The cemhouses have begun to appear in the urban space from the early 1990s on (Es, 2006, p.6).

Nevertheless, the status of the cemhouses is ambivalent. Regarding the status of the cemhouses, there are ongoing debates that revolve around whether they are culture centers or places of worship. These two frames are used interchangeably by different Alevi and non-Alevi actors in different contexts for different purposes (Es, 2006, p.7). In the official discourse, cemhouses have implied the places of culture through the rhetoric of *kültür evi* (cem and culture house), *cem kültür evi* (cem culture house), or *Alevi kültür merkezi* (Alevi culture center). This is because the status of place of worship is denied to the cemhouses. They are legally allowed to be constructed as culture centers (Es, 2006, pp.6-7).

The rhetoric of culture is not only a legal imposition, though. The Alevi subjects are also ambivalent in their view of the cemhouses. Its meaning is context-driven in the discourses of the Alevi subjects. While in some places it refers to the place where the cem ritual is performed, in some other places it is used to indicate the whole space where people involve in the social, religious, and cultural interactions (Es, 2006, p.7). In this study, I will use the phrase "place of faith" rather than "cemhouse" since the participants themselves call the place in this way owing to the fact that cemhouse is only one part of the whole shrine.

3.4. The Context of the Micro-Study: *The Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı*¹

¹ <http://www.sahkulu.com/>

This study is endeavored to scrutinize various social relationships within a particular Alevi place of faith. This is the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı*. It is distinguished from the other recently constructed cemhouses by its being a historical space of Bektashi belief. The *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı*² had been established in the last quarter of the fourteenth century by one of those Khorasan dervishes, Şahkulu Sultan, who was entitled to disseminate the principles of the Bektashi order to the people of the newly conquered lands. During the Ottoman Empire, it functioned as a Bektashi Shrine. When it comes to the Republic, it was closed down by the law on the closure of religious convents and dervish lodges in 1925. Despite the various efforts, the *Dergah* could not escape to fall into ruin until it was restored and brought into its current outlook by the Association in 1985. Today, the *Dergah* continues to work under the auspices of the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı Mehmet Ali Hilmi Dede Baba Araştırma Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı* in Merdivenköy, Göztepe, Istanbul.

Currently, the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı* carries out some services which fall into the fields of faith, education, and culture. The religious services are the primary functions of the Shrine. To this purpose, the Shrine involves one cemhouse where the weekly cem rituals are performed; one dining hall where a particular meal, *lokma*, having a special importance in the Alevi belief, is serviced to the followers; and mausoleums of prominent figures of the Bektashi order where people visit and pray.

The educational services also occupy a significant place in the agenda of the *Dergah*, covering both religious and mundane education. The *Dergah* opens the weekly courses in which Alevi and non-Alevi academics and authors give talks on Alevism with regard to its diverse dimensions such as its theology, history, philosophy, and literature. Apart from that, the Wakf administration opens courses on literacy, playing musical instruments, *semah*, computer skills, apiculture, and arts and crafts. Furthermore, the Wakf administration accommodates a library that involves rich sources on Alevism. The last but not the least important service of the Shrine is to provide scholarships for the university students and encourage graduate students who are intended to make research on Alevism. The Wakf has also begun to build a culture and accommodation center for the university students with the assistance of the donations. Finally, the *Sahkulu Sultan Dergahı* accommodates a Women's Commission and Youth Commission which are informal autonomous spaces in the Shrine where the Alevi women and Alevi youth organize themselves, socialize, deliberate their common concerns, and take action, and make networks outside the Shrine. The experiences of the Youth Commission constitute the subject matter of this thesis.

² http://www.sahkulu.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=83:tarihce&catid=6:tarihce&Itemid=11

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. Opening the Space for Counter Discursive Interaction: Subaltern Counter Publics

This study theoretically rests on Cohen and Arato's conceptualization of civil society, which is elaborated in their voluminous book *Civil Society and Political Theory*. The Habermasian notion of communicative action constitutes the core of their tripartite model in that they theorize civil society as a contemporary emancipatory project (Cohen and Arato, 1994).

The *lifeworld/system* distinction in Habermasian theory is central to an understanding of Cohen and Arato's conception (1994, pp.427-433). Accordingly, *system* refers to economic and administrative systems which work towards the material reproduction of society through instrumental actions of individuals which are based on an instrumental rationality. On the other hand, *lifeworld* refers to the everyday world which we share with others on the basis of shared meanings and understandings. The *lifeworld* consists of three components: society, culture, and personality. The *lifeworld* works towards social integration, which is based on a communicative rationality. Thus, civil society is grounded on the society component of the *lifeworld* (Cohen and Arato, 1994).

In the light of this introduction, Cohen and Arato define civil society as "a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication" (1994, p.ix). Thus, civil society stands out against the "colonization of the lifeworld" by the administrative and economic systems. Yet, this definition is not intended to include all social life which remains between the state and economy, as Cohen and Arato stated (1994, p.ix). The actors of political society (political parties, political organizations, and parliaments) and the actors of economic society (organizations of production and distribution, firms, cooperatives, partnerships, and so on) remain outside of civil society. This is because the logic governing the actions of these actors is based on an instrumental rationality which strives to "control and manage". However, the institutions of civil society are governed by a communicative rationality. In other words, as Cohen and Arato asserted, "The political role of civil society...is not directly related to the control or conquest of power but to the generation of influence through the life of democratic associations and unconstrained discussion in the cultural public sphere" (1994,

pp.ix-x).

According to Cohen and Arato (1994), only those structures of the lifeworld that accomplish the functions of socialization, conscious association and self-organization, and organized forms of public communication, on the way to being institutionalized, can be qualified as a part of civil society (p.x). These structures of the lifeworld-socialization, association, and public communication-have been embodied in the notion of public sphere. In Habermasian theory, the idea of public sphere implies that a body of "private persons" assembled to discuss matters of "public concern" or "common interest" (Fraser,1992, p.112). These publics are strived to achieve "an ideal of unrestricted rational discussion of public matters" which is open and accessible to all regardless of "inequalities of status" (Fraser, 1992 , p.113).

Public sphere is an independent space from the state, where "production and circulation of critical discourses of the state" take place (Fraser, 1992, p.110). In other words, public spheres mediate between society and state by holding the state accountable to society via publicity (Fraser, p.112). At the same time, public sphere is independent from the space of economic processes. As Fraser stated that "it is not an arena of market relations but rather one of discursive relations, a theater for debating and deliberating rather than for buying and selling" (Fraser, p.111). Thus, the public sphere in Habermasian terms is an "institutionalized arena of (free, open, and tolerant) discursive interaction" independent of both state and economy (Fraser, p.110).

A number of scholars have criticized the Habermasian notion of public sphere on the ground that the ideal of free rational debate between equals has never become a reality (Benhabib, 1992; Eley, 1992; Fraser, 1992; Ryan, 1992). The liberal conception of public sphere has always been based on the exclusions of those who lack power. Fraser (1992) argues that because of their exclusion from the bourgeois public sphere, "members of subordinated social groups-women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians-have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics" (p.123). Fraser (1992) called these alternative publics as "subaltern counter publics".

Grounded on Cohen and Arato's framework of civil society, this study interprets the workings of empirical case specifically through the theory of "subaltern counter publics" whose basic foundations were laid down by Nancy Fraser, a feminist critical theorist.

4.2. Democratizing Counter Publics: Civility and Self-limitation

Some scholars argue that counter publics have an emancipatory power for the members of the unprivileged groups who are not able to participate in the discursive interaction because of their exclusion on various grounds (Benhabib, 1992; Eley, 1992; Fraser, 1992; Ryan, 1992). These counter spaces allow them to formulate and circulate their own discourses. Yet, they are not always democratic and egalitarian (Fraser, p.124). Counter publics might become a part of power asymmetries in itself. Or, repression might be seen as a way of dealing with internal or external differences. For that reason, a consideration of these dimensions is crucial if counter publics are to yield an emancipatory force. As Göle (1997) pointed out that "The 'rise of the oppressed' can be emancipatory only if it is not itself repressive" (p.5).

In order to shed light on the democratic potential of counter publics, this study combines the organized form of public communication with the notions of civility and self-limitation. With regard to this, Akman's "social orientations perspective" provides us with a systematic framework to analyze the normative dimension of civil society. Akman (2012) defines civility "as social actors' willingness for non-repressive engagement with others in political and cultural contestation" (p.334). Similarly, in Norton's thought, "civility implies tolerance, the willingness of individuals to accept disparate political views and social attitudes; to accept the profoundly important idea that there is no right answer" (1993, p.214). In brief, civility is "willingness to live and let live" (1993, p.214). Yet, Akman adds another dimension to the principle of civility. In his view, civility as "a norm, a value, an abstract moral commitment" is not sufficient alone. It needs to be combined with a mode of practice. This is the notion of self-limitation (2012, p.14). Therefore, this study is intended to scrutinize the social actors' predisposition to civility and self-limitation through three dimensions: mode of engagement with the state authority, opponents, and members.

CHAPTER 5

THE ALEVI YOUTH IN THE *DERGAH* : A SUBALTERN COUNTER PUBLIC

5.1. Introduction

The discursive model of public space epitomizes the political ideal of open, inclusive, and effective deliberation about matters of common and critical concern (Ryan, 1992, p.259). Some aspects of this public sphere scheme, in its Habermasian articulation, have received much criticism (Benhabib, 1992; Eley, 1992; Fraser, 1992; Ryan, 1992). Most importantly, scholars have questioned the historical accuracy of the claims to openness and accessibility and the idealization of a singular "liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere" and the portrayal of this model as a historically specific development in the early modern era of the Western Europe (Benhabib, 1992; Eley, 1992; Fraser, 1992; Ryan, 1992).

A revisionist understanding of historiography would posit that the ideal of participatory parity in the public sphere has never turned into reality because power asymmetries among the possible constituencies of the public have been treated as if they did not exist (Fraser, 1992, p.113). Thus, as Eley points out, "its elitism blocked and consciously repressed possibilities of broader participation/emancipation" (Eley, 1992, p.306).

The act of public deliberation in the early representations of public sphere belonged to those who were the educated, the propertied, and the masculine (Fraser, 1992). Yet, it produced some silences. It was the silence of those who were underprivileged on the basis of the status of gender, property, subordinate ethnic identity, and so on (Fraser, 1992).

Eley (1992) argues that "the actual pursuit of communicative rationality via the modalities of the public sphere at the end of the eighteenth century reveals a far richer social history than Habermas' conception of a specifically bourgeois emancipation allows" (p.330). Various narratives of the revisionist historiography suggest that from the very beginning of the societal interactions, members of subordinated groups have problematized the various sorts of power relations, embedded in the dominant public sphere, and created "points of access" to the comprehensive public sphere (Ryan, 1992, p.283). Historically, women, members of working-class, peasantry, subordinate nationalities, peoples of color, and homosexuals have attempted to construct their autonomous spaces of deliberation and action and taken their grievances, once being a part of the their private

space, into the public (Ryan, 1992, p.260).

Looking from this angle, alternative publics seem to have an emancipatory power in terms of narrowing down the gap in participatory disparity between dominant and subordinate groups in society (Fraser, 1992, p.122). Many scholars agree that the incorporation of marginalized groups into the public sphere through the construction of alternative autonomous spaces has been a positive development in dealing with the limits of contemporary democracies in terms of ensuring open and inclusive processes of deliberation (Benhabib, 1992; Eley, 1992; Fraser, 1992; Ryan, 1992).

Fraser calls these alternative publics "subaltern counter publics", by which she refers to "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser, p.123).

Göle, travelling across non-Western societies with the notion of public sphere, points out that it neither finely resembles nor completely diverges from the Western models but rather it becomes subjected to a "continuous alteration by a field of cultural meanings and social practices" (2002, p.176). In keeping with this, Göle argues for the Turkish context that "the implementation of a secular and progressive way of life" lies at the center of the efforts to construct a public sphere in Republican Turkey (2002, pp.176-177). Moreover, it is some sort of authoritarian modernism that has governed these efforts in contrast to the Western model of public sphere in which rather a bourgeois and individualist liberalism has been the driving force (Göle, 2002, pp.176-177).

As opposed to the discursive model of public sphere in the West, rooted in the principles of universal access and openness, its counterpart in Turkey had been constructed as a state-centric model of public sphere (Çaha, 2005; Çolak, 2008; Göle, 2002; Roy, 2006). The defining feature of the early Turkish public sphere was its being rested on significant exclusionary mechanisms. As the public sphere was imagined as a secular, national, and manly space, it inevitably led to the alienation of some segments in society (Çaha, 2005; Çolak, 2008; Göle, 2002; Roy, 2006).

Nevertheless, the historically alienated groups of the Republic-Islamists, Kurds, Alevis, feminists, and some others-have begun to problematize these structured power relations and challenge the boundaries of the public sphere in the post-1980 era (Çaha, 2005; Çolak, 2008; Göle, 2002; Roy, 2006). With their efforts, the issues, once being confined to their private realms such as religious freedoms, collective rights of ethnic groups, and issues of sexuality, have begun to be

discussed within the context of concerns of common interest.

Within this process of reconstruction of public sphere, the struggle of the Alevi community might be seen as a powerful example of the incorporation of a subordinate identity to the the comprehensive public sphere. Owing to the changes brought by the "Alevi revival" in the 1990s, the members of the Alevi community have successfully constructed a counter public of their own through associational activities, journals, demonstrations and other engagements in the public sphere (Erdemir, 2005). Since then, the Alevi community has succeeded in incorporating their concerns into the public agenda and has therewith come to be accepted as an important societal actor by political authorities.

This study is concerned with unveiling some of the dynamics shaping the forms of public communication within the Alevi counter public. The emphasis is on the pursuit of the vestiges of the communicative action via the modalities of counter public within a small fragment of the Alevi public, that is, the Alevi youth of *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı* in Istanbul.

The argument I put forward is that the *Şahkulu* youth has successfully constructed a counter public within the *Dergah* to formulate their oppositional interpretations of Alevi identity and their grievances with regard to the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by the people in power position while simultaneously constructing itself as an embryonic counter public vis-à-vis the general Alevi counter public. In other words, this is a story of the Alevi youth's efforts to construct a counter public within a counter public. The youth has successfully constructed a counter public within the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı* notwithstanding the fact that it represents only an embryonic formation within the broader Alevi community.

5.2. The Youth as a Category of Analysis

The subject matter of this study is the experiences of the Alevi youth in the context of a politics of place. However, a study of the youth requires us to contemplate what it means to be "young". In the scholarly literature, the notion has often been conceptualized as a universal stage in human development (Swedenburg, 2007, p.4). This stage demographically refers to the period 15 to 24 years (Swedenburg, 2007, p.4), -which is usually associated with "a series of developmental stages involving mental, physical and psychological maturation that all people are assumed to go through" (Boratav, 2005, p.203).

Other scholars, however, have suggested that the youth category itself is "a social construction interwoven with modernity, societal structures and the process of individualization (Morch, 2003 as cited in Demir, 2012). This genre of constructivist scholarship emphasizes "the heterogeneity of the experience and the meaning of what it means to be "young" under various circumstances" through exploring, for instance, "how young people construct their identities in the context of family relations, institutional experiences and social and economic circumstances" (Wyn and White, 1997, pp.148-149 as cited in in Boratav, 2005). Therefore, viewing the youth as a "socially and culturally determined category" (Swedenburg, 2007) requires us to accept that the construction of youth and the experiences of youth are driven by the contextual idiosyncracies (Demir, 2012). In other words, the youth cannot be reduced to a neutral demographic term.

In the Turkish case, the youth image has meant different things in different time periods. Neyzi (2001) examines the construction of youth in public discourse of Turkey at three periods: the 1923-50 period, 1950-80 period, and post-1980 period. In the first period (1923-50), the construction of the youth cannot be abstracted from the state of society which had just left behind the War of Liberation and strived to form and consolidate a new regime. In this context, the youth was viewed as "guardians of the regime". Neyzi (2001) maintains that "Young people were central to the ideology of Turkish nationalism because the goal of the regime was to create a new type of person with a new mind-set, imbued with the values of the Republic and freed of what were perceived as 'the shackles of tradition' " (pp.416-417). In the following period (1950-80), the youth in Turkey became highly politicized and polarized between the leftist and the rightist camps as a part of the politicized youth movements in the world (Lüküslü, 2009, p.114). As a consequence, the image of a rebellious youth became the prevalent characterization in the public discourse (Neyzi, 2001, p.426). Neyzi (2001) comments that "Despite a change in discourses on youth, the two historical periods discussed represent a continuity in a historical tradition in which youth were educated to protect the state-even from itself" (p.422).

In the context of the politicized youth movements of the 1960s and 1970s, various scholars posit that, in a time of urbanization, the Alevi youth did not remain indifferent to the influence of political movements of the period and became an active part of the socialist movements in this era (Çamuroğlu, 2008; Okan, 2004; Özmen, 2011). Bozarslan explains that socialism gained wide currency among the Alevis due to them being economically underdeveloped and experiencing socio-religious discrimination (Bozarslan, 1997, p.180, as cited in Özmen, 2011, p.47).

The construction of the youth in the post-1980 period has been referred to "the first serious

rupture with modernist constructions of the youth in Turkey" (Neyzi, 2001, p.412). The coup of 1980 constituted a milestone for the youth (Lüküslü, 2009; Neyzi, 2001), in that the following social, political, and economical transformations have been conducive to the production of a new type of youth (Demir, 2012, p.98). Neyzi (2001) explains the changing picture as follows:

The expression "turning the corner" is commonly used to characterize the ethos of the post-1980 period, evoking images of the wanton display of "private" lives and consumption-oriented lifestyles in the age of media and economic liberalization accompanied by widespread corruption and the private use of public resources...Given the cultural weight of both the Republican and 1968 generations in the public sphere, members of the generation known as the "Ozal generation" or the "post-1980 generation" tend to be represented as selfish, individualistic consumers, implying the lack of a sense of collective responsibility (pp.423-24).

Recent studies on youth further argue that a great deal of political apathy and low levels of political participation and civic engagement have characterized many members of the post-1980 generation (Lüküslü, 2009, p.146).

In spite of this general state of being among the post-1980 generation, Neyzi points out some new developments taking place among some segments of the youth. She argues that

Today, young people are increasingly able to express themselves through the new media, challenging their construction in public discourse, the established hierarchy between elders and juniors, and the mission imposed on them by adult society. This suggests that the construction of age in Turkish society may be changing in the current period...At the same time, the exclusion of young people from established institutional spaces has resulted in the creation of alternative spaces and forms of political mobilization (Neyzi, 2001, pp.426-27).

Given the lack of any significant work examining the lifeworld of the Alevi youth in the post-1980 period, it is one of the tasks of this study to fill this empirical blindspot. In particular, I do so by inquiring into how the Alevi youth has constructed itself through various practices in the context of "the hierarchy between elders and juniors and the mission imposed on them by adult society" (Neyzi, 2001, p.426). This question will be addressed along the general research endeavor of investigating the Alevi youth's performatives of constructing "alternative spaces and alternative forms of participation" within an environment of exclusion by "established institutional spaces" (Neyzi, 2001, p.427).

5.3. The Emergence of the Youth's Space: The *Şahkulu* Youth Commission

The organized presence of the young in *Dergah* goes back to the early 1990s. The *Şahkulu* youth began to gather under the roof of the Youth Commission when the *Dergah* was first renovated

by the *Şahkulu Sultan* Association. Then, it continued its existence under the same roof when the administration of the *Dergah* passed into the *Şahkulu Sultan* Foundation.

Cohen and Arato argues that "modern civil society is created through forms of self-creation and self-mobilization" (1992, p.ix). Following this assumption, the first thing to inquire into is whether the association of the *Şahkulu* Youth is an example of self-creation or, rather, its creation is an initiative of the *Şahkulu* Administration.

The manager of the Foundation, I. U. (52), stated that the Youth Commission was established simultaneously with the establishment of the Association by the initiative of the administration. She stated that:

The construction of the Youth and Women Commissions is a tradition among the Alevi institutions from the very beginning. Even the village associations have these sorts of commissions. It was present even at the first Alevi association, *Divriği Kültür Derneği*, which was established in 1946. These forms of structures are not only a part of the associational activity in Turkey but also a part of the Alevi institutions in Germany³.

One of the former members of the *Şahkulu* Youth Commission, D.Z. (30), with a background in the youth branch of the *Pir Sultan Abdal* Association, also confirmed this statement. He stated that:

When a new Alevi institution is established, the administration assigns the formation of the commission to the young who have already developed some networks of friendship there. Then, the commissions begin to operate as the sub-branches of the institutions⁴.

The statements indicate that the organization of the youth in most Alevi institutions do not depend on an independent action by the youth itself, including the *Şahkulu* Youth. This is of course not to say that the youth has never acquired an independent status.

Neyzi (2001) argues that the youth image in Turkey at different time periods was "burdened by the weight passed on by previous generations"(p.412). The same is true for the treatment of the Alevi youth in the Alevi community. The accounts of a former study regarding the Alevi youth and organizations, whose sample included a much wider population of the Alevi young from different

³ Translated into English from original: "Her yerde ama her yerde, bütün kurumlarımızın içinde var. Köy derneklerimizde bile var şu an. Mesela Divriği Kültür Derneği 1946'da kurulan ilk dernekmiş orada da varmış. Bu bir gelenektir. Sadece burada değil Avrupadaki örgütlenme yapısı içerisinde de bunlar var. Mesela geçen Almanya'dan bir grup genç gelmişti. Onların da gençlik kolları var."

⁴ Translated into English from original: "Bu kurumlarda gençlik komisyonu şöyle kuruluyor bildiğim kadarıyla. Bundan önce ben Pir Sultan Abdal Derneği'ndeydim Şahkulu Dergahına gelmeden önce oradaydım. Şimdi oradaki yeni bir dernek kurulduğunda alt organları olarak kuruluyor. Bir kurum oluşuyor, gençler gelip gitmeye başlıyor ve yönetim kurulu diyor ki siz gençlik komisyonu kurun diyip belli kişileri..evet yani kendiliğinden oluşmuş birliktelik var zaten orda arkadaşlık çerçevesinde ilişkiler çerçevesinde. Daha sonra o görev veriliyor."

institutions, reflect a rough image of the youth in the most Alevi institutions (Ezgin, 2009). Accordingly, the objectification of the youth characterizes the way in which the Alevi adults in position of power tend to view the youth. In other words, young people have a place as long as they perform the assumed roles, drawn by the people in power who are very often from the older generations (Ezgin, 2009).

In this imagination, the rationale behind the construction of the Youth Commissions is to prevent the disappearance of tradition by encouraging passing down the principles of the Alevi identity to the younger generations and creating a bond of solidarity among the young Alevi (Ezgin, 2009). However, in this picture, the tradition conveyed is the adult's interpretation and construction. At this point, the youth expresses their grievances with regard to the state of not being very well received of their efforts to engage in philosophical interpretations of their own (Ezgin, 2009, pp.99-100).

The narratives of the youth in Ezgin's study also show that the young are disproportionately represented within the Alevi institutions (Ezgin, 2009). On the one hand, the expectations from the administrations of the young is to carry out service work such as food delivery, funeral services, and some other labor-intensive works, socialization activities for the purpose of creating ties of solidarity among the young Alevis and performance of the religious rituals. On the other hand, the young are not allowed to engage in decision making process at the higher level. Furthermore, in most institutions, the composition of the Youth Commission is altered with the each new coming administration since each administration wants to work with the young who will assist them at the workings of the institutions. Thus, in general, the Alevi youth seem to become a long way off asserting themselves as autonomous subjects neither in the general public sphere nor in the Alevi community.

Given this reality within the Alevi community, the *Şahkulu* Youth is distinguished from most of its counterparts notwithstanding the fact, however, that the very formation of the Youth Commission in *Şahkulu* followed a similar process of commissioning from above. Different from other communal groups, though, the *Şahkulu* youth has succeeded to create an autonomous space of their own since its founding almost two decades ago. The young have refused to work as a shadow of the administrations although this has come at the expense of a series of confrontations with the central of authorities in the *Dergah*. As opposed to the situation in many other Alevi institutions, the composition of the Youth Commission in *Şahkulu* has never been influenced by the rotations in the administrations. The *Şahkulu* youth has always preserved its autonomous status even in times of its

annulment. B.U. (35), one of the oldest and the most vocal members of the Youth Commission, stated that they owe their current autonomous status in the *Dergah* to their adherence to the principle of "being nobody's man". Complying with this principle has ensured them an autonomous platform in the *Dergah* whereby they have operated the processes of deliberation to problematize existing power hierarchies, to construct an authentic voice on the issues regarding the Alevi community and to draw attention and coordinate action in regard to issues of general public concern.

5.4. Exclusion, Self-Mobilization, Institutionalization, and Going Beyond the *Dergah*

In relation to the dimensions of self-creation and self-mobilization in civil society associations, Cohen and Arato (1992) argue that

It is institutionalized and generalized through laws, and especially subjective rights, that stabilize social differentiation. While the self-creative and institutionalized dimensions can exist separately, in the long term both independent action and institutionalization are necessary for the reproduction of civil society (p.ix).

In this context, a scrutiny of the history of the *Şahkulu* Youth yields an example of how an informal network evolves into an association which is grounded in an institutional structure. In general, the Youth Commissions in Alevi institutions do not possess a formal status as the *Şahkulu* Youth does not have in the *Dergah*. In the *Şahkulu's* statute, there is no reference to the status of the Youth Commission. In connection with this, the Youth Commission is not viewed as an entity which is to be represented in the decision-making bodies. The very consequence of this informal status for the youth is that their existence often faces the risk of being subjected to the arbitrary decisions of administrations. They have to receive approval of the administrators for their actions. In the case that the young behave in contradistinction to the orientations of the decision makers, the existence of the Youth Commission is imperiled.

The history of the Youth's associational activity in Alevi community is replete with examples of suppression and exclusion. Many members of the youth commissions in various Alevi institutions who were critical of practices of administrations and *dedes* were dismissed from their institutions. In response, the youth commissions of the eight Alevi institutions mobilized against the suppression of dissidence within their institutions. Their self-mobilization was embodied and institutionalized in the establishment of The Alevi Bektashi Youth Platform (*Alevi Bektaşî Gençlik Platformu*) in 2005⁵.

⁵ <http://www.agep.gen.tr/>

D.Z. (30), who was involved in the early process of its formation, explained the rationale behind the formation of AGEP:

In general, there is a widespread problem in Alevi shrines, associations, foundations, and cemhouses. Each institution wants to form the youth of their own. If the youth becomes critical of their stances and practices, they dismiss these young people and they replace them with the young who support their policies. Our rationale to form this platform was to discuss about our common problems, raise our voices and objections against these arbitrary practices of exclusions, and coordinate our efforts to take common action⁶.

D.Z. also pointed out that the formation of platforms is a widespread tendency in the Alevi community. However, the young are disproportionately represented in these platforms as well. He said:

These sorts of initiatives are a tradition in Alevi community. The administrations of the Alevi institutions have often formed platforms. Yet, they do not reach the lay people. The members of the administrations and chair persons gather, make meetings, and take decisions. Nevertheless, the young in Alevi community have not engaged in these forms of organizations so far⁷.

AGEP emerged as the first association as such among the Alevi youth. It functions as a formal non-governmental organization and embodies the proper procedural qualifications of formal structures. This is well reflected in the fact that it has its own bureau, website, declaration of principles, official membership lists, formal procedures regulating the workings, and a formal name under which the members can organize meetings and release press statements. Currently, although it is active in name and in website, the members lack a physical space of their own owing to the economic deprivations. This point needs a special consideration because it suggests that acquiring an average degree of institutionalization is not immune from power asymmetries embedded in society. For instance, the class status of the people might posit an obstacle before institutionalization. This occurs in spite of the fact that they fulfill the most essential requirements

⁶ Translated into English from original: "Genel olarak Alevi dergahlarında, derneklerinde, cemevlerinde her yönetim kurulunun kendine göre bir gençlik komisyonu var ya da beğenmediği yani fikirlerine karşı çıktığı ya da sorun yaşadığı gençlik komisyonunu direk dışarı itip ya da kendisine yakın olan gençlik komisyonunu, gençleri daha doğrusu gençlik komisyonuna atıyor, atama usulü yapıyor yani. Bunu yaşadık ne yapalım hani bunların da temsilcisi olmak bunlarla ilgili de konuşabilmek, sonuçta daha ortak bir platform kurulması gerektiğini ya da işte platformun bu noktada da eylemde bulunması, faaliyette bulunması gerektiğini düşündük. Yani bir platform denince bizim aklımıza gelen tanım şu oluyor: ortak bir şekilde sesimizi birleştirip daha gür çıkmak ya da işte ortak şeyler yapmak ya da hani varsa tehlikeler onlara karşı da ortak bir ses çıkarmak, ortak tavır almak şeklinde..."

⁷ Translated into English from original: "Böyle girişimler daha öncesinde vardı. Yani bu gelenek olarak var. Dedim ya üst yapıların ortak örgütlenmeleri var ama bunun tabana yayılması söz konusu değil. Yani ortak eylemleri ne şekilde oluyor? Yönetim kurulu üyeleri ya da başkanlar bir araya geliyor ve onlar kendilerince orda bir toplantı yapıyor, karar alıyor. Bizim burada bir birlikteliğimiz yok, gençlerin böyle bir şeyi yok."

of being a civil society actor, which are particularly organized communication and the toleration of differences. Therefore, it shall not be inaccurate to argue that too much focus on the institutionalized dimensions of civil society actors reflect a class-bias.

5.5. The Youth Commission: A Space of Socialization

According to Cohen and Arato (1992), although civil society actors fall into a space between state and economy, there are restrictions on qualifying every form of association as a part of civil society. In this regard, they argue that "Civil society refers to the structures of socialization, association and organized forms of communication of the lifeworld to the extent that these are institutionalized or are in the process of being institutionalized" (1992, p.x).

To begin with the socialization function of civil society actors, there is an immense literature showing that people who are members of civil society institutions go through a process of socialization (Talpin, 2007). These institutions help to bring "strangers" together by turning them into "alike". Through encouraging recurrent face-to-face interactions, voluntary associations instigate to construct strong social ties and shape individuals' identities (Talpin, 2007).

The *Şahkulu* Youth Commission provides an illustrative case of the provision of a secondary source of socialization for young people. For many, the Youth Commission emerges as the first space of sociability and associability after their families and schools. Most of the people with whom I spoke began to take part in the Commission from the very early years of their life, particularly the years of high school or even primary school. Their first contact with the *Dergah* started with their participation in *semah* and *bağlama* lessons, given by the members of the Youth Commission. Their narratives reveal that participation in these courses allowed them to meet face-to-face with the other Alevi fellows, to enjoy pleasure of dancing and doing music together and to create strong bonds of friendship. Moreover, people in their very young ages get sense of what it means to be a part a collectivity by taking responsibilities. Participation in *semah* and *bağlama* courses fuels the newcomers to participate in the Youth Commission. The social ties developed during the attention of these lessons evolve into more strong personal relationships within the Youth Commission.

B.D. (19), a *semah* instructor and an active member of the Commission, describes his first contact with the Youth:

When I came here first, I was 9 years old. After that time, I devoted myself to this

shrine. I have been here in every sunday since then. There were big brothers here who were university graduates, well-educated, and highly aware of everything from whom I learned a lot. I was very little but I was attending their activities and watching them. They were giving responsibilities to me in the activities. For instance, although I was very little, they made me the group leader in *semah* and I became extremely happy. For instance, Brother ... (senior *semah* instructor) smoothed the way for me. He believed in me. He appreciated my efforts. One of the best things about here is that senior fellows encourage the participation of the juniors. In that way, they both relieve their burden and hinder the disappearance of the tradition⁸.

B.B. (17) is a two years member of the Commission. He explains how his personal relationships with the people in the Commission have turned to be strong ties of friendships.

Most of my friends in my life are from the *Dergah*. The ties of friendship here are so deep. Our way of looking at the faith, politics, and the world is similar. We have strong feelings of empathy and tolerance towards each other. I do not think I can find these kinds of relationships anywhere. This is different. We are comrades.⁹

H.L. (33), a senior *semah* instructor, stated that:

We have got accustomed to here a lot. Most of our friends are here. Probably, we would not make it outside. We have grown up here. Everything is here. I have very few friends outside¹⁰.

The views expressed above demonstrate that the youth's space in the *Dergah* functions as a "breeding ground" for the production of social capital (see Putnam, 2000). Robert Putnam (2000), describes the concept of social capital as "connections among individuals—social networks and the

⁸ Translated into English from original: "9 yaşındaydım geldiğimde ve o günden sonra hayatımı vakfettim nerdeyse buraya. Yani pazar günleri hep burada oldum nadir farklılıklar olmadığı sürece. Ondan sonra geldim, ... abi o dönemde burdaydı, ... abi zaten burda. İşte ... abiler filan ve çok güzel gençlik çalışmaları oluyordu. Yani bir de hepsi okumuş yazmış ve bilinçli insanlardı. Şu an aramızdaki insanlar okuma babında demiyorum ama bilinç biraz daha eksik eskiye göre. Onun için değerlendirirken eski gençliği daha hoşnutlukla karşılıyorum ve beni hoşnut etmekte daha mutlu ediyor. Yani onların yaptığı çalışmalar küçüktüm müçüktüm ama aralarında geziyordum, yaptığı çalışmalarda bana görev veriyorlardı, beni mutlu ediyordu. Misal semahta beni ekip başı yapmışlardı ve ben çok mutlu olmuşum. Bu genç yaşında örneğin ... abiler benim önümü açtı ciddi anlamda ve özellikle bu işin ilk şeyini yapan ilk adımı atan ... abi gerçekten benim hakkettiğime inandı, benim hoca olmamı sağladı. Haa hocalık çok önemli mi değil ama bana verdiği değer çok önemli ve şunu da görüyoruz burda çalışmalar içinde insanlar çalışmalara hep birbirlerini dahil ediyor ve kendi üstündeki yükü hem paylaşıyor hem de yolun kaybolmasını engelliyor."

⁹ Translated into English from original: "Arkadaşlarım şu anda en çok Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı'ndan ve gittikçe artıyor ve artmasını da istiyorum. Burdaki dostluk normal arkadaşlık sayılabilecek bir dostluk değil. Çok çok ilerisinde ve derin çünkü düşüncelerimiz, yapımız, inancımız, siyasete bakışımız, herşeye bakışımız nerdeyse birbiriyle aynı. Gençlik komisyonundaki herkes birbirine daha çok şefkatli, daha çok ilgilimiz. Böyle bir arkadaşlığın bulunmayacağını düşünüyorum. Bu yoldaşlıktır aslında."

¹⁰ Translated into English from original: "Şimdi şey yani biz alıştık artık. Çevremiz burda, arkadaş çevremiz burda. Yani belki biz burasız yapamazdık çünkü burda yetiştik. Yani herşey burda. Benim dışarda doğru dürüst bi arkadaş çevrem yok. "

norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them”(p.19). Putnam (2000) argues that networks and voluntary associations are breeding ground for the production of social capital. For Putnam (1993), social capital is central to any civic engagement because it "can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (p.167).

Many examples of collective action from the youth's history epitomize the idea of how social capital-embedded in networks of relationships helps people to coordinate their actions. Several examples from the present case study can be named to illustrate this point: the formation of Alevi Bektashi Youth Platform in alliance with the Alevi youth of other institutions; organization of the yearly thematic conference series, Traditional Youth Days, (sometimes thematizing the issues of private concerns regarding *Alevilik* and sometimes the issues of common concern such as Global Warming or the Education Reform); contribution to the *Dergahta Birlik Projesi* (Unity in Shrine Project) initiated by the prominent religious figures of Alevi community; organization of music and dance performances for contributing to the education of the poor, and organizing and attending demonstrations, and so on.

However, social capital does not always and necessarily yield positive results for social cooperation and peaceful coexistence of differences. For that reason, scholars often make a distinction between different forms of social capital. Two forms of social capital are widespread in the literature. These are *bonding* and *bridging* social capital. Bonding social capital describes "co-operative and trusting relations between members of a network who see themselves as similar in terms of their shared social identity". Bridging social capital, on the other hand, describes a situation of "respect and mutuality between people who know that they are not alike in some socio-demographic sense (differing by age, ethnic group, class etc.)" (Rostila, 2010, pp.312-313). Scholars contend that bridging social relationships are more supportive of social cooperation and peaceful coexistence as they allow people to develop feelings of trust and reciprocity to the wider publics and interact and cooperate with the wider networks going beyond their ethnic/religious enclaves (Rostila, 2010).

In this light it is possible to argue that the composition of the Youth Commission is more conducive to the formation of bonding social capital. This is because most of their social relationships occur with the members of the Alevi community. Although bonding social capital is supportive of the feelings of solidarity, trust, and cooperation among the group members, an excessive "we" feeling might lead to the alienation of the young from the outside world. On the other hand, the composition of the Youth Commission in terms of diversity with regard to ethnic identity

and political affiliation might become significant in precluding the formation of an excessive collective identity and allow the participants to have an access to the wider networks. The participants' ethnic identity and political affiliations exhibit remarkable diversity. In terms of ethnicity, the Commission consists of Turks, Kurds, and Zazas. The informants also report the presence of a few Sunni people in the past. One of the informants stated that he has relatives with an Armenian background as well. In terms of political orientations, the Commission embraces different colors of the Turkish left. Although most of the participants are official members of the Youth Branch of the Republican People's Party, there are participants who are sympathetic to Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP), Turkey's Communist Party (TKP), and Peace and Democracy Party (BDP).

5.6. The Youth Commission: A Discursive Space

In keeping with Cohen and Arato's definition of civil society, a close examination of the *Şahkulu* Youth Commission yields that it seems to be not only a network of rich social capital but also an informal association organized along deliberative procedures. Strong ties of friendship, trustworthiness, and reciprocity prepare the ground for an organized form of communication among the youth.

The procedures defining the workings of a deliberative process can be summed up under four criteria:

- *inclusion*, being open and accessible to a wider population;
- *rationality*, deliberation being a collective decision making process ruled by the force of the better argument;
- *publicity*, arguments have to be justified in front of all the participants;
- and *consensus*, the regulatory ideal of the discussion should be the largest possible agreement amongst participants (Talpin, 2007, p.207).

In terms of the subject at hand , Seyla Benhabib (1992) states that the norm of communication which governs the workings of a discursive public space is the idea of *egalitarian reciprocity*. She explains it as follows:

The procedural constraints of the ideal speech situation are that each participant must have an equal chance to initiate and to continue communication; each must have an equal chance to make assertions, recommendations, and explanations; all must have equal chances to express their wishes, desires, and feelings; and finally, within dialogue, speakers must be free to thematize those power relations that in ordinary

contexts would constrain the wholly free articulation of opinions and positions. Together these conditions specify a norm of communication that can be named that of *egalitarian reciprocity* (p.89).

This leads me to investigate to what extent the youth's norms of communication accommodate the requirements of *egalitarian reciprocity*. To this end, the ways in which they organize the discursive space and the relationship between the organizational structure and communication patterns deserves particular attention.

Participation in the discussions of the Commission is open to everybody eager to partake. The Commission has not specific entry requirements. For instance, there is no age requirement even though the name of the Commission refers to the youth. The ages of the participants vary from the fifteen to the fifty. Considering the fact that some of the members are married and have children, marriage is not considered as a threshold drawing a line between adolescence and adulthood. Moreover, being a member of the Alevi identity is not asked, either. The respondents stated that there were also some Sunni people in the past. There is no need for signature for formalizing membership and no membership fee as well. The basis for participation is not membership but volunteering. However, it does not mean that the way in which individuals participate is non-organized. As Calhoun stresses, the ideal of publicness requires active communication, not the lazy citizens (Calhoun, 2011, p.319). In keeping with this, in one of the meetings B.U. (35) pointed to the importance of disciplining the participation and many others agreed with him. He said:

Volunteering is devoting yourself to working for our cause. It does not mean indiscipline. Comrades should relieve the burdens of their fellows. We need qualified people here. Quantity does not matter. Sanctions are must for disciplining ourselves. We should punish those who are unwilling to abide with the rules. Otherwise, we cannot achieve our goals¹¹.

With regard to the membership styles of associations, Akman refers to the presence of two extremes (2012, p.331). On the one hand, there are associations with minimal entry and exit costs, demanding minimal commitments from members, and emotionally less demanding participation (Akman, 2012). On the other hand, there are associations which involve strict entry and exit costs, maximalist demands on members, and having a transformative force on the identities and life styles of the members (Akman, 2012). Considering these two extremes, the Youth Commission certainly diverges from the loosely defined membership style. It has not a perfect match with the other

¹¹ Translated into English from original: "Gönüllülük hizmete adanmaktır. Bu disiplinsizlik anlamına gelmez. Kararlara uymayanlar gelmesinler. Disiplin önemli. Yoldaşlık yükleri azaltmaktır. Biz burada nitelikli insanlara ihtiyaç duyuyoruz. Nicelik önemli değil. Kurallara uymayanlara ceza verilmeli. Disiplin için yaptırım şart. Aksi takdirde hedeflerimize ulaşmamız çok zor. "

extreme, either. As the participants of the Commission organize around an identity of faith, it transforms the identities and life styles of the participants. As D.Z. (30) pointed out, the Commission has a moral perception of its own shaping the behaviors of the participants. Yet, on the basis of my observation, I can argue that it has not a stifling quality. Here, the critical distinction is that the Alevi faith system has been historically associated with a non-stifling or non-repressive ethos and practices owing to its heterodox nature. For that reason, even if the ethos of Commission has an influence on the lives of people, it is not stifling.

To continue with the procedures of the deliberative processes, flexible organizational structure of the Commission encourages the individuals to involve in an open and free communication style. Regarding the principles of organizational structure, the participants have a similar orientation with the members of new social movements like feminist movements, ecological movements, peace movement, and some others (Pichardo, 1997, p.416). They support forms of non-hierarchical and non-bureaucratic organizational structures. In opposition the widespread tendency among the Youth Commissions in Alevi community, they reject organizing around a leader or governing body. Rather, they have prefer having a rotational spokesperson. Recalling the principle of *egalitarian reciprocity*, this form of organizational structure is quite important because it allows people to have an equal chance to deliberate as equal peers thereby eliminating structuring quality of hierarchy and difference.

B.D. (19) explains that this egalitarian organizational structure has its roots in the Alevi theology:

We do not have a leader. We do not believe in the power of one man (*tek adamlık*). Our theology allows us to question everything. It comes from the workings of *cem* ritual. As *dede* asks the participants for their consent before starting the ritual, we similarly deliberate things among us and decide collectively. As happens in the *kırklar cemi*, we are all same. We are all equal. We all have equal voice. The forties of us amount to one of use. One of us amounts to forties of us¹².

The Commission also seems to be successful in socializing the new members into the prevailing norms and values respected among them. B.B. (17), one of the newest members, explains his views regarding the leadership:

I am against the leadership. Because if we are all bonded at the heart and if we all work

¹² Translated into English from original: "Yok, bizde başkanlık sistemi yok çünkü tek adamlık yok bizde. Yani kişilerin her zaman sorgulama sistemi var. Bunun da geldiği yer Alevi ibadeti ve cem. Cemde nasıl dede posta oturmadan önce razı mısınız diye kendini sorgulatabiliyorsa biz de insanları kendi içimizde sorgulayıp hep birlikte karar alıyoruz. Onun için kırklar cemindeki gibi aynı hepimiz, aynıyız, bir ayırım gütmüyoruz ve birlikteliği sağlamış oluyoruz. "Kırkımız da birimiz, birimiz de kırkımız" mantığına geliyor."

for this collectivity, we should all have equal voice¹³.

In its history, which goes back almost two decades, the Youth Commission has developed its own well-established rules, norms, and values in the workings of the weekly deliberation sessions. These normative and procedural principles are highly valued because they are an accumulation of the tested-experiences of different generations.

Accordingly, meetings are held twice a week, on Wednesdays and Sundays. The duration of the meetings varies from one to three hours contingent upon the number of topics on the agenda. They are quite strict on the timings of the meetings. Anyone who is late more than fifteen minutes is not accepted to attend the meetings. There is no exception to this rule. Once, I personally observed that the most vocal senior participant of the Commission avoided entering the meeting room since he was quite late. Since there is no leader, anyone willing is entitled to be a moderator. Yet, the tendency is to give this role to one of the junior participants in order to socialize them into the workings of the deliberative process.

When the meeting starts, everybody is expected to actively participate to the discussions, share their views, and be attentive to those who are speaking. The Commission has well-established and highly respected-norms regulating the style of communication among the individuals, whose observation is expected from participants. The senior members have an active role in reminding the juniors these principles. People those interrupting the others' speeches, exceeding the time limit, raising their voices aggressively, amusing themselves with their cell-phones, leaving the space without excuse are warned. Then, the moderator initiates the discussion and asks the other participants for the issues which they want to be discussed. It does not exceed five or six topics. The agenda topics change every week in parallel with the agenda of the Dergah, Alevi community in general, the country's general public agenda, and sometimes the global agenda. It is a matter of how they prioritize the issues.

Boundaries of public sphere with regard to which topics are to be involved in public deliberation is a widely discussed issue. Habermas is quite clear on this matter: individuals in the public sphere deliberate about the common good (Habermas, 1974, p.49). However, this view has been heavily criticized by many scholars, and particularly so by feminists. According to Fraser, the public and private distinctions serve to "delegitimate some interests, views, and topics and to

¹³ Translated into English from original: "Hiyerarşik bir sisteme genel olarak karşıyım. Burası bir kurulsu, herkes buraya gönül veriyorsa, emek veriyorsa hepsinin düşüncesi bir olmalı."

valorize others...This usually works to the advantage of dominant groups and individuals and to the disadvantage of their subordinates" (1992, p.131). The history of the feminist struggle to politicize the issues of female body and sexuality is an illustrative case in point. That is to say, domestic violence was considered as a private concern for a long time but it turned to be a common concern owing to the the feminists' efforts to thematize it in their counterpublics and then, disseminate it to the wider public. The experiences of the feminist movement proved that the public-private distinctions are political constructions and subjected to change (Benhabib, 1992; Fraser, 1992; Ryan, 1992; Eley, 1992). Thus, issues of common concern are not predetermined facts but the result of individuals deciding by themselves through discursive interaction what is to be considered public or private.

The main function of the Youth's discursive space needs to be understood within the tension between the "generalizable interests" and "culturally interpreted needs" (Benhabib, 1992, p.88). Fraser (1992) explains the relationship between public sphere and identity as follows:

public spheres themselves are not spaces of zero-degree culture...public spheres are not only arenas for the formation of discursive opinion; in addition, they are arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities...participation means being able to speak in one's own voice, and thereby simultaneously to construct and express one's cultural identity through idiom and style (p.126).

In keeping with Fraser's thoughts, the main function of the young's discursive engagement is to formulate an oppositional interpretation of Alevi identity, and to circulate this vision to the wider Alevi population while simultaneously constructing itself as an embryonic counter public within the general Alevi counter public.

The young movement's oppositional interpretation of identity has developed as a reaction to the efforts of circles who want to assert their conception of Alevi identity in a hegemonic manner. This vision belongs to the *Cem Vakfi* (Cem Foundation)¹⁴. Within the Alevi community, the *Cem Vakfi* has emerged as politically and economically the most powerful group and shows an outstanding performance in reaching the wider Alevi population through particularly channels of visual and printed media. This distinguished power position endows it with the ability to define the boundaries of the Alevi identity. On this relationship between power and knowledge, Foucault (1977) provides a pertinent account:

Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, 'becomes true.' Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. Thus, 'there is no

¹⁴ For further information, please check the website: <http://www.cemvakfi.org.tr/>

power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations (p.27).

In keeping with this Foucaultian power/knowledge relationship, the tenets of the ground on which the *Cem Vakfi* stands within the Alevi community can be subsumed under three headings (Okan, 2004, pp.126-149). First of all, the strategy of the *Cem Vakfi* towards the plethora of interpretations is the taming of the Alevi identity into one single interpretation via standardizing the practices and ethos of the identity. Secondly, this single interpretation is based on a construction assuming that "Alevi Islam" is the real essence of Islam and its ethos and practices have been historically shaped by the Turks in Anatolia. Finally, the ultimate objective of the Cem Vakfi is to integrate the "Alevi Islam" into the state through a restructuring of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Okan, 2004).

The *Cem Vakfi's* efforts to make its discourse hegemonic have evoked resistance among the participants of the Youth Commission. The young's interpretation of Alevi identity is grounded in the understanding of *Alevilik* as a syncretic structure whose ethos were historically shaped by the contributions of various communities living in Anatolia and influenced from diverse faith systems from monotheistic religions to Zoroastrianism, shamanism, and Buddhism. For the youth, in face of current realities, Alevi identity is more of "a multicultural garden"(*çok kültürlü bahçe*),-which involves elements of faith, philosophical pursuit, and political posture. However, it does not mean that they reject other interpretations or bases of identification. In this regard, one discourse is very common among the young: "There is one path but many ways to follow". D.Z. (30) expresses:

If somebody defines Alevilik in a different form, it is not a problem for me. It becomes a problem only if proponents of any vision start to assert it as the right and only form of the belief and try to form a domination over other views...The motives for personal transformation should come from inside. Change occurs with love.¹⁵

This particular understanding of identity allows the young to problematize the issues which might be loosely related with the theology of the belief in the case of other interpretations. A implication of this situation for civil society is that discursive engagement which revolves around the culturally specific needs begins to concern with the issues of common interest. For instance, in one of the Youth Days, which is organized in every summer around a common theme, the young

¹⁵ Translated into English from original: "Bir insan kendini böyle tanımladığında ve başkasına bunu dayatmadığı süre içerisinde ve kendisini bir kimliğin sözcüsü olarak ifade etmediği sürece benim için problem değil. Yani sözcü derken bir grubun tahakkümü, misyoneri gibi davranmadığı sürece benim için problem yok, karışmıyorum yani. İlgilendirmiyor daha doğrusu beni karışmıyorum derken. Değişim içerden gelmeli. Değişim ancak aşk ile mümkün olabilir. "

thematized the issue of global warming, and brought it into the agenda of people in the *Dergah*.

D.Z. (30) explains the rationale behind thematizing global warming in their discursive spaces:

We organized this event as a result of our belief. *Alevilik* does not reside in somewhere outside the world. It exists under these circumstances. We live under these circumstances. This event is an extension of *Alevilik* as culture in our daily lives. Living in peace with the nature is a necessity of *Alevilik*. The culture requires us to be sensitive to the right to life, the rights of others, not necessarily our lives. And, it urges us to mobilize and take action as far as an injustice is concerned. As one of the Alevi saints said before, 'if you remain silent before injustices, you lose your honor as well as your rights'¹⁶.

Thus, the presence of these sorts of events suggest that the young's oppositional interpretation of identity provides them with culturally specific lenses which encourage them to go beyond the scope of their enclaves and develop concerns with and also for others.

5.7. Power Relations, Exclusions, and the Youth's Counter Public

Formulating a clearly defined identity encourages the young to perform a critical function of civil society associations. As Cohen and Arato (1992) assert, "The political role of civil society is not directly related to the control or conquest of power but the generation of influence through the life of democratic associations and unconstrained discussion in the cultural public sphere"(pp.ix-x). In this regard, the participants of the Commission have striven to generate an influence on mainly two problems: the efforts towards the assimilation of *Alevilik* by the hands of the Alevis themselves and non-democratic organizational practices within the institutions.

¹⁶ Translated into English from original: "Hani Alevilik diyince şöyle bir şey yok, yani dünyanın dışında işte hani belki kimi zaman tanım yapınca böyle bir şey söz konusu olabiliyor çünkü tanım başka bir uzaya atmak gibi bir şey Aleviliği ya da herhangi bir şey gibi tıpkı. Alevilik uzayda bir yerde değil ya da işte çok uzakta bir yerde değil, bu dünyada bu koşullar içerisinde yaşıyor ve bu koşullar içerisinde hani bir kopmuşluk yok yani bu koşullar içerisinde Alevilik inancından kaynaklı olarak, Alevilik inancının sonucu olarak bu tür eylemlere girişiyor bence. Yani biz mesela hani o dönemde bunları yaparken de bir Alevilik inancının sonucu olarak bunları yapıyorduk. Yani hani dünya kendi dışında algıladığın bir şey değil, dünyanın içersindesin, yaşamın içersindesin. Mesela hani ben şeyde demiştim ya kültürle ilgili bir sorun vardı senin yani kültürün senin pratiğin etkisi nedir diye ona verdiğim bir yanıt vardı benim işte hani sonuçta hani bir telkinde bulunuyor insanlara sürekli olarak. Ne yap? İyi ol, doğru ol, güzel ol. Şimdi sen diyelim ki iyi olmak, doğru olmak için çabalıyorsun. Bunlar Alevilik düşüncesinin, disiplininin ürettiği sonuçlar. Bu sonuçlardan bir tanesi de mesela doğaya karşı saygılı ol ya da yaşama karşı, başkasının hakkına karşı duyarlı ol. İllaki senin hakkının yenmesi olarak da görme bunu. Yani başkasının hakkının yendiği noktada da y ada senin hakkının yendiği noktada da buna karşı duyarlı ol ve harekete geç, eylem yap, eylemde bulun.İşte hani şöyle bir söz vardı "haksızlık karşısında eğilmeyiniz, hakkınızla birlikte şerefınızı de kaybedersiniz".

The problematization of these issues within the Dergah has resulted in an exclusion of the youth by the authorities holding power. The exclusion of the youth is a critical point in the emergence of the youth's space as a counter public. Fraser (1992) argues that "Counter publics emerge in response to exclusions within dominant publics and they help expand discursive space" (p.124). Within the boundaries of the Shrine, the youth has been subjected to a mechanism of double exclusion. While its criticism of the Shi'ization of the identity has directly positioned them against the authority of the traditional figure (*dede*), their critique of the unjust power relations within decision-making body paved the way for a profound contestation of the authority of members of the governing body. In the following paragraphs, I will delve into this contestation's specific dynamics.

The clash between the *dede* and the young is a micro-space manifestation of power relations among Alevi actors,-who can be seen to be in rivalry about defining the boundaries of their group identity. From the youth's perspective, the *dede's* thoughts and practices are representative of the *Cem Vakfi's* position. Similarly, the Alevi authors are proponents of this view, who give weekly lessons on *Alevilik* in *Dergah*. The posture of the youth on this position is clear: it has self-defeating implications for the *Anadolu Aleviliği*. This vision amounts to the assimilation of the *Alevilik* in the form of Shi'ization.

Fraser (1992) argues that "in stratified societies the discursive relations among differentially empowered publics are as likely to take the form of contestation as that of deliberation" (p.125). In the case of the *dede* and the youth, the discursive relations took the form of harsh contestations. The channels of deliberation were completely closed down when the *dede* became a part of the governing body. After that point, the *dede* benefited from his authority position in order to block the workings of the youth in the *Dergah*. When the conflict reached extreme dimensions, the young people were physically dismissed from the cem space, their semah practices were blocked, and they were denied to have a space to do their weekly meetings. Under these circumstances, the participants of the Commission have never ceased to engage in discursive interaction. B.D. (19) explains how they continued to gather in open air spaces under snow and rain. Despite all these obstacles, the very fact that they continued and enlarged their activities stands as a sign that their movement even gained momentum in face of the conflict.

Fraser (1992) asserts that "...to interact discursively as a member of public, subaltern or otherwise, is to aspire to disseminate one's discourse to ever widening arenas" (p.124). In keeping with this, the youth undertook several activities in order to circulate their counter discourses to the

wider Alevi public. To this end, they thematized the issue of self-assimilation under the title of "Anatolian Alevilik in the Grip of Assimilation" during the Youth Days in 2009. By starting with the Youth Days and later in the larger gatherings and meetings of the Alevi community, the youth disseminated their counter discourses from the wider Alevi public through their manifest, entitled "We are against".

While conflicting with the traditional authority, the *Şahkulu* youth simultaneously engaged in a contestation with the ruling authority in the *Dergah*. In understanding the source of this contestation, Habermas's arguments are quite useful. Habermas argues that such publics aim to "mediate between society and the state by holding the state accountable to society via publicity" (as cited in Fraser, p.112). In the micro-space of the *Dergah*, accountability can be problematized within the context of the power relations between the governing body and the participants of the *Dergah*. In this respect, the interviews I conducted lay bare that the central concern of the youth was to democratize the Wakf's non-democratic charter. B.D. (19) described the practices of the ruling body, with the metaphor of "a sultanate system". D.Z. (30) states:

We wanted to democratize the Wakf charter. We were ready to do anything necessary. Reaching influential people to create a strong pressure, petition campaigns, sit-in acts, and anything necessary to raise people's awareness and pressuring the ruling body...We were bound and determined to democratize this anti-democratic charter¹⁷.

The youth criticized the charter because it did not allow to a transparent, accountable, and participatory decision making process. Rather, this rule rested on an arbitrary and unlimited usage of power.

The administration of the *Dergah* consists of three bodies: the founders' committee (7 people), board of trustee (35 people), and the governing body. Power is hierarchically dispersed along these bodies. The previous charter vested the members of the founders' committee with unlimited powers. Most importantly, their membership status is granted them for life. Moreover, in the case of death, their rights may pass on to those people who are entitled by the members of the committee. Furthermore, they have an absolute tenure on the property of the Wakf. The Shrine might be closed down by their request. Also, they had a right to dissolve the governing body which is formed through democratic elections.

¹⁷ Translated into English from original: "Kongreden hemen sonra ve öncesinde konuştuğumuz şey buydu. Yani biz vakıf tüzüğü'nün daha demokratik olması için elimizden geleni yapacağız. Yani üzerimize düşen ne varsa işte. Birileri ile konuşmaksa, kamuoyu baskısı yaratmaksa...Yani gerekirse burada imza kampanyası, oturma şeklinde, insanları bilinçlendirme şeklinde ne varsa yani burada olan şeyin anti-demokratik yapının bir şekilde sonlanmasını talep ediyorduk."

The democratization of the Wakf charter was an extremely challenging task in light of the position of the youth. That's to say, the Youth Commission has no official status to make a pressure on change. Also, the demographics of the young demonstrate that they are disadvantageous in terms of their class status. Most of them are not wage-earners. Under these circumstances, they had only few communication channels to bring about a change. The only strategy that may have produced positive result could have been influencing the prevalent public opinion within the *Dergah*. The young in fact achieved this. The first step was raising an awareness in people about this issue. Then, they succeeded in discussing the status of charter in a congress which was held open to the public. As a result of a process of bitter discussions, the youth accomplished democratizing the Wakf charter to an important degree. Particularly, the power asymmetries among the organs were diminished via allocating the before-mentioned rights among the 35 people rather than 7 people.

With the democratization of the charter, the process of creating influence on authorities has not come to an end. Democratization requires a rotation of power which is essential to hear the voices of alternative forces within the *Dergah*. Yet, the youth stated that the same people occupied the positions of power in the *Dergah* very long time. With regard to this, the young mobilized to create an influence on the composition of the decision making body. At the final stage, the young's efforts of lobbying became successful in bringing their candidate into the power. The new president differs from the previous authorities in his interpretation of Alevi identity and approximates to the youth's interpretation. He also dramatically drifts apart the strong Kemalist/Republican posture of the people in the *Dergah's* administration and the public in general. The new president, who is a Zaza-speaking Alevi and a victim of the 1980 coup d'etat, strives to initiate a democratic opening in the *Dergah* nowadays.

Nevertheless, the accomplishment of this objective was never painless. It came at the expense of the exclusion of the youth. Despite this exclusion, the Youth Commission has never ceased to perform as a platform for deliberation and action. As Fraser (1992) argues:

in stratified societies, subaltern counter publics have a dual character. On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides. This dialectic enables subaltern counter publics partially to offset, although not wholly to eradicate, the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups in stratified societies (p.124).

Likewise, the Youth Commission has provided the young people with a "space of withdrawal and regroupment" and a "base and training ground for agitational activities directed toward" the

authority figures within the *Dergah*. The resultant product of this activism has been to exterminate the unjust power relations within the *Dergah* to an important degree.

5.8. Future Prospects for the *Şahkulu* Youth?

So far I have shown that the *Şahkulu* Youth has begun to construct a micro counter public which has contested the hegemonic discourses of the Alevi identity and the exclusionary norms underlying the style of decision making within the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahi*. Yet, within the framework of the general Alevi public, the status of the *Şahkulu* Youth resembles an embryonic form of counter public. Given that a new president in the *Dergah* took office,- who happens to have the same orientation as the young, the youth might channel its energy into the projects going beyond the boundaries of the *Dergah* and begin to influence the wider Alevi public. Yet, here is a caveat involved. If the *Şahkulu* youth strives to become an autonomous subject within the general Alevi public with a power to shape an oppositional interpretation of Alevi identity and contest the structured power relations characterizing the Alevi institutions, it needs to overcome one very crucial weakness, the quality of its public discourse.

Thus far, the *Şahkulu* youth showed a considerable degree of success in challenging the immediate power relations surrounding them within the *Dergah*. However, their *raison d'etre* transcends such immediate concerns. That is to say, they formulate their mission as the resurrection of the authentic form of the Alevi identity. This is a demanding task, though. Formulating an oppositional interpretation of the identity discourses against those discourses striving to become hegemonic requires a profound and sophisticated engagement in and with the public discourse.

However, the youth's general engagement in the discursive space is characterized by a lack of sophistication in discussions and a lack of enthusiasm to deliberate and interact with the participants. The narratives of the informants demonstrate that competent university students constituted the main driving force in the heyday of the Commission. Hence, public discourse has increasingly deteriorated as the efficacy of the university students has diminished. This situation has grave implications for the internal workings of the Youth Commission. Most importantly, this situation encourages the creation of an internal power relations between participants who are seniors and the more experienced, the more educated, the more communication-wise, and the more confident in ability of the self-expression and those who have the less of everything. Although it is an unintended consequence, the stances of a small minority dominates the others. A more serious challenge to the Commission comes from the fact that the small minority has begun to show signs

of fatigue from performing too much responsibility. This might lead to the dissolution of the Commission if it is left to continue.

Beyond the internal workings of the Commission, the poor quality of public discourse might become an obstacle before the ultimate mission of the Commission, the resurrection of the *Anadolu Aleviliđi*. Owing to the Commission's failure to encourage an environment of intellectual deliberation to flourish and a sophisticated communicative action might confine their activism to the level of a reactive movement which does not have so much chance to ignite the wick of a change within the wider Alevi community. Thus, if the *Şahkulu* Youth is to become a respectable counter public in the wider Alevi community, certain improvements on the sophistication of the public communication seem to be an essential component of this process.

CHAPTER 6
DEMOCRATIZING THE YOUTH'S COUNTER PUBLIC:
CIVILITY and SELF-LIMITATION

6.1. Introduction

In contemporary debates, the students of civil society are preoccupied with a particular conception that stresses a particular dimension of civil society referring to "a given stock of organizational capacities that exist autonomously from the state" (Akman, 2012, p.329). However, some scholars contend that this conception is far away from reflecting an accurate picture of civil society because it falls short of distinguishing civil society from uncivil society (Bieber, 2003; Casquete, 2005; Chambers and Kopstein, 2001; Dryzek, 1996; Fiorina, 1999; Foley and Edwards, 1996; Kopecky, 2003; Mudde, 2003; Whitehead, 2004; as cited in Akman, 2012). In keeping with this, Swift maintains that "if civil society is a catch-all category encompassing an assortment of groupings and a diversity of social forces and interactions, then unquestionably it also includes fascists, terrorists, racketeers, criminal elements as well as individuals and groups committed to democracy and the much fancied neighborhood organizations" (as cited in Johnson, 2006, p.45)

The ontological conception of civil society fails to differentiate between the groups committed to civil society and those inimical to it by conflating the two. Hence, the ambivalence on the usage of the term requires the students of civil society to find out what exactly constitutes the civil society apart from being an ontological entity. With respect to this, Norton argues that "civil society is more than letterhead stationery, membership lists, public charters and manifestos...It refers to a quality...without which the milieu consists of feuding factions, cliques, and cabals" (1993, p.214). This quality is the principle of civility, which constitutes the normative dimension of civil society.

In grasping the meaning of civility, an understanding of its antithesis, incivility, might be illuminating. According to Casquete (2006), uncivil society comprises of "communities suffering from an excess of collective identity...which often leads to a pathological collective state in the form of social isolation, sectarianism, ethnocentrism, or self-closure within a narcissism of minor differences" (p.283). Although these sorts of communities are conducive to the development of strong bonds of fraternity among the members, they are not susceptible to the blossoming of respectful behavior towards the liberty of their members and outsiders and of a moral consideration

of equality of every human being, regardless of faith, ethnic origin, values or ideology (Casquete, 2006, pp.284-286). Hence, uncivil communities often block the channels of communication among social actors through promotion of a "poisoning public speech and interaction with prejudice, hate, intolerance, and violence" (Akman, 2012, p.334). Thus, uncivil communities destroy the spirit of civil society. For that reason, any investigation of civil society should be able to single out civil actors from uncivil communities.

Going back to the definition of civility, as Norton (1993) points out, it is "a cast of mind, a willingness to live and let live" in simple terms (p.214). Complying with this principle requires social actors to recognize the presence of the others as moral agents deserving civility (Chambers and Kopstein, 2001, p.839). It urges social actors to accept that "there is no right answer" (Norton,1993, p.214) and "not all means to achieve the desired ends are legitimate" (Akman, 2012, p.334). Hence, social actors are expected to develop "habits of the heart" (tolerance, moderation, a willingness to compromise, respect for opposing viewpoints and the rule of law), if they are to contribute to the social cooperation, peaceful existence, and flourishing of a democratic community (Johnson, 2006, p.346). Akman (2012) formulates the concept of civility as the "social actors' willingness for non-repressive engagement with others in political and cultural contestation" (p.14). Supplementing this abstract orientation with a practical dimension, the principle of self-limitation describes the ways in which social actors "impose and enforce limits on permissible means to achieve the desired ends" (p.14). Grounded on this conceptualization, this study is endeavored to scrutinize the actors' mode of interaction with differences within the balance between abstract principles and daily life practices.

This leaves us to the point that an empirical study whose theoretical framework anchored in forms of public communication shall be always imperfect without investigating normative orientations of the social actors in question. To this purpose, this chapter is intended to analyze the Alevi youth's mode of interaction with differences on the level of engagement with the state authority, out-group people and in-group members. I attempted to compare their attitudes toward differences with the stances of the Alevi adult with regard to the same issues in order to question whether their oppositional interpretation of identity and their experiences-anchored in the discursive space have an impact on their mode of interaction with differences in state, society, and the group itself.

Before starting to analyze the interview narratives, there is a need to clarify several methodological concerns. First of all, the conceptualization of differences in this study is not

designed as an imposition by the author of this research. Rather, they are conceptualized around the widely-circulated public discourses, which I observed during the fieldwork in the *Dergah*. That's to say, the presumed differences reflect the people's differences, not the researcher's preferences. Secondly, as this study is endeavored to understand the right balance between norms and practices, this concern is considered while preparing the interview questions. Rather than questioning their stances on abstract principles, I inquired the ways in which they perceive the differences over particular events. To this purpose, the topics which constitute the subject matter of the questions are chosen from the recent-widely discussed issues from Turkish society and politics.

6.2. Engaging with the State Authority

Among the students of civil society, the most common way of seeing the civil society is viewing it as "an initiative and organization independent of and opposed to the state"(Chatterjee, 1990; as cited in Akman, 2012, p.323). This view often characterizes a zero-sum relationship between state and civil society in that one side gains at the expense of the other side. However, Akman (2012) maintains that this understanding of civil society is "over-simplistic theoretically and inaccurate empirically" (pp.5-6). He argues that both empirical reality and philosophical accounts demonstrate that state authority is necessary for the existence of civil society to an important degree. That's to say, it prepares an environment which is conducive to the creation of civil, non-violent, non-repressive engagements among social actors. It does so through "instituting the rule of law and providing the minimum of state services and protections", benefiting mostly from its unique power to monopolize the use of legitimate violence (Akman, 2012, pp.6-7). Therefore, civil society becomes possible under the conditions where "the legitimacy of the state is not constantly under threat through the aggressive anti-state actions of the citizens" (Johnston, 2006, p.49).

Building on this, a healthy working of state-society relationships requires the social actors to comply with "the rules of the game" (Schwedler, 1995, p. 7). That's to say, they are expected to employ legitimate instruments of monitoring and controlling the state authority (Schwedler, p.6). With regard to this, Keane argues that "the presence of widespread violence without doubt pushes a society closer to the uncivil end of the spectrum (as cited in Johnson, 2006, p.49). When this is the case, the power of the weapons supersedes the power of the better argument, leaving no space for the civil society to blossom.

For any empirical scrutiny of civil society investigating the character of the social actors' relationship with the state authority, the concept of political culture emerges as a useful conceptual

instrument. Almond and Verba describes political culture "as a set of citizens' orientations toward political objects based on their knowledge, beliefs, opinions and emotions" (as cited in Grigoriadis, 2004, p.1). In other words, political culture has a considerable influence on the ways in which people interact with the political authority and on how people perceive which actions or instruments are legitimate to countervail the political authority. Hence, the social and political ethos which are fostered by a democratic political culture might also nurture the matrix of values which is essential to the development of civil society.

Some studies demonstrate that the quality of political culture in Turkey is not very much supportive of a healthy working of democratic system (Esmer, 1999; Tesler and Altinoğlu, 2003). Developing a democratic political culture is important for flourishing of a civic culture which is "based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that [permits] change but [moderates] it" (Almond and Verba, 1963, p.8). In keeping with this, some distinguished characteristics of the Turkish political culture is the dominance of state interests over fundamental human rights, the lesser amounts of tolerance for cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity, and the poor levels of trust to the democratic institutions and the exalted role of the military and bureaucratic elite as guardian of the Western and secular character of the Turkish state and society (Grigoriadis, 2004; Kalaycıoğlu, 2008).

Suffering from a lack of "culture of communication and persuasion and a culture of consensus and diversity" (Almond and Verba, 1963) among social actors, the legitimacy of the means to influence politics has always been a serious concern in Turkey. In its recent history, some social and political actors have considered to employ extralegal means to challenge the political authority at various times. In the history of Turkish politics, the 1960 coup d'etat left a legacy of political involvement by the military in times of crisis. Currently, one of the widely-discussed topics in the Turkish politics is the *Ergenekon* case which involves the trials of those military officers who are charged with attempting to organize a coup d'etat to the Justice and Development Party government. Similarly, the armed struggle has been one of the long-established tradition of resorting to illegitimate means to claim an extralegal authority from the ideological confrontations of the 1970s to the current armed struggle of the *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*.

So far, I have endeavored to show that as a certain degree of state authority is supportive of the blossoming of civil society, social actors are bound up with acting within the scope of legitimate action. Nevertheless, undemocratic political culture in Turkey deeply shapes the attitudes and behaviors of the people. In keeping with this, in this part of the study, I have endeavored to

scrutinize the mode of interaction with the state authority among the Alevi people in the *Dergah*. As the Alevi people do not live in a social and political vacuum, a consideration of this relationship may require to investigate to what extent they drift apart from the dominant political culture in Turkey.

With regard to this, in the first of the two interview questions, I endeavored to learn what they are thinking about the political involvement by the military. To this purpose, I chose one of the very recent political crisis during which the military intervention had been brought to the public agenda when the polarization of the society reached its climax during the April 2007 political crisis prior to the presidential election. Owing to the people's perception of the JDP government as "an existential threat to the the Kemalist legacy of the nation-state structure", the secular sectors of the society organized mass rallies, titled *Cumhuriyet Mitingleri* (Republican Meetings) in the major cities of the country (Yavuz and Özkan, 2007, p.122). One of the widespread demands which came into prominence during the rallies was the invitation of the military to the conquest of political authority. The *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı* also actively encouraged the participation of the people into these rallies. I particularly asked what was their stance during the rallies and whether or not they supported the idea of the military involvement in those turbulent times.

The adult expressed an overt support for the political involvement by the military. I want to add one caveat here. Although I interviewed with the several people from the adult sector of the *Dergah*, the people with whom I interviewed are prominent figures who have a high influence on the people around them. G.Z.'s stance, more or less, represents the stances of women in the Women Commission. Then, *dede* as a religious figure possesses a discursive power on the participants of the *Dergah*. Particularly, on the question of military intervention, the majority of administration at that time supported these rallies. Moreover, during my participant observant in the weekly *Alevilik* courses I sometimes heard an overt support for the military's extra-political authority among the participants of the courses.

G.Z., the head of the Women's Commission, stated that she worked very hard in organizing these rallies and maintained:

The military officers had to make a coup d'etat on July 22. If they had made, our Republic would have not been imperiled that much. After that point, even if they made a coup d'etat, nothing will change. We are in the point of no return now¹⁸.

¹⁸ Translated into English from original: "22 Temmuz'da darbe gelmeliydi. Kesinlikle gelmeliydi. Cumhuriyet bu kadar tehlikeye girmezdi yani gelmeliydi. Şimdi bu saatten sonra gelse de farketmez."

Dede, a very important authority figure in the *Dergah*, expressed statements supportive of the G.Z's stance:

Military intervention can become an option if the acquisitions of the Republic fall into danger and if some people betray the Republic, the principles of Atatürk and the military¹⁹.

With regard to taking a stand on military interventions, the youth, without exception, maintained that military intervention is not a legitimate instrument for generating influence or conquest of power no matter who is in power.

B.U. (35), a very vocal participant of the Youth Commission, became critical of the Alevi community in general and the figures of the *Dergah* in particular with regard to their hypocritical position on democracy.

The Alevis suffer from a deep paradox in this issue. Almost all Alevi institutions participated in these meetings. However, it is very strange that the same institutions could not form a unity against the time-out decision of the Madımak massacre. They often claim that they are democrats but you cannot see internal democracy in their institutions. They claim that our cemhouses are outside of the politics but they never cease to follow the principles of Kemalism. During the time of the education reform for the uninterrupted eight years education, this institution helped the *Batı Çalışma Grubu* (a military-leaning organization) to collect signatures; however, they had done nothing for the Alevi youth's demand for abolishing the mandatory religion lessons. If you ask the heads of the all institutions, you will see that almost eighty percent of them support the military interventions. They say that the coups are bad but not all coups...There are good coups, bad coups, your coups, my coups in their discourses. Military intervention amounts to resorting to the use of violence in my view. The Alevis claim that they are against oppression and they are always with the oppressed but inviting the military to the intervention means that you approve violence. If being on the side of the oppressed is the greatest virtue, do not be cruel! Today, who makes intervention to politics is oppressive no matter who makes it. Today, if the JDP is in power, it shows the failure of the opposition. It is like a football match. You either win or lose. If you yell here and there, it means that you can not overcome it with the power of your ideas; so, you will overcome it with the force of your muscles. It is a real pity!²⁰

¹⁹ Translated into English from original: "Bence cumhuriyet kazanımlarını korumak adına hoş görülebilir çünkü cumhuriyete ihanet ediliyor, orduya ihanet ediliyor. Bizler seçme ve seçilme hakkına sahibiz ama yanlış yollara gidildiğinde, cumhuriyetin Atatürk'ün yolları yok edilmeye çalışıldığında elbette ki şeyin darbenin yapılması gerekir."

²⁰ Translated into English from original: "Darbeyi kesinlikle meşru bir yol olarak görmüyorum. Alevilerin zaten bu noktada bir çelişkisi var. Cumhuriyet mitinglerine ülkedeki hemen hemen bütün Alevi kurumları katıldı. Ama aynı Alevi kurumları örnek veriyorum mesela Sivas davasına zaman aşımında on tane adam bir araya gelmiyor. Aleviler bir araya gelmiyor. Aleviler bu noktada doğru akılla tartışmayı bir türlü beceremediler. Bu doğru akıl nedir işte kendini demokratik bir şey olarak tanımlama. Demokrasiden yana olduğunu söylerler mesela, her şeyin demokratik yollarla çözülmesi gerektiğine inanırlar ama kurumlarında böyle bir şey hiç yoktur mesela. Aynı şekilde derler ki bizim cemevlerimiz siyasetin dışındadır şu parti, bu parti, şu ideoloji, bu ideolojiden değiliz derler ama

B.D. (19) touched upon the negative repercussions of the 1980 coup d'etat on the Alevi community.

He stated:

It was the members of the Alevi community and the leftist groups who became the greatest victims of the 1980 coup d'etat...The 28 February Process amplified the assimilation on the Alevi community. We may not appreciate the JDP government but they are democratically elected. They received the 50 percent of the votes...I am against the all kinds of military interventions no matter who does it. The last one would strike the other party but they are human beings as well²¹.

The second interview question takes the question of extralegal authority of the illegitimate instruments a step further. I wished to learn their stance on the legitimacy of resorting to violence. I asked whether they would consider an armed struggle in the case of further oppression by the state authority as happened in the case of the Kurds in which the exhaustion of the democratic channels paved the way for the guerrilla movement.

With regard to the question of violence, there seems to be a consensus among the all

Kemalizmin peşinden ayrılmazlar...Burada da otobüsler kaldırıp gittiler. Hem ideolojik olarak öyle bir yapının içinde bulunmamız zaten hem de ideolojik olarak çok da doğru bulmuyorum. Sekiz yıllık eğitim zamanlarını hatırlıyorum. Bu kurum imza kampanyasıyla imza topladı Batı Çalınma Grubunun ortak çalışmalarıyla imza toplandı sekiz yıllık zorunlu eğitim istiyoruz diye. Ama bu kurum biz zorunlu din dersi istemiyoruz kardeşim diye imza toplamadı. Çok ciddi çelişkiler var. Bu kurumlar kendi davalarının peşinden koşmak yerine bir takım yapıların peşinden koşturulmaktan hoşlanır duruma geldiler. Bir oylama yapsanız ve Alevi kurumların başkanları gelse AKP'ye karşı darbe olmasını ister misin deseler yüzde sekseni isterim der. Ama 12 Eylül askeri darbesinden sonra solculara, devrimcilere ne olduğunu düşünmezler mesela. Bugün AKP dediğin şeyi 12 Eylül'ün yarattığı noktada hiç kimse bir şey söylemez, yeşil kuşak projesi hangi dönemde ortaya çıktı, bu yeşil kuşak projesiyle amaçlanan şey neydi? Aleviler bunları bilirler ama bu analitik düşünceyi yapmazlar. Darbe iyidir ama her darbe iyidir demezler. İyisi olan vardır, kötüsü olan vardır. Benim darbem, senin darben...Ben o dönem kimindi bilmiyorum bir grubun şeyi vardı çok hoşuma gitti ne postal ne takunya .Ben çok doğru buluyorum onu. AKP'nin izlediği politikaları da son derece başarılı buluyorum. Çünkü adamlar çok güzel çalışıyorlar, son derece başarılı. AKP ordaysa karşısındaki grubun kafasının iyi çalışmadığını gösterir bu. Adamlar güzel çalışıyor. Bu işler futbol maçı gibi. Kazanırsın ya da kazanamazsın. Kazanamayınca tribünden çıkıp da bilmem ne hakem diye bağırmanın bir anlamı yok. Çığırkanları da biraz böyle tipler. Darbe silaha başvurmadır...Aleviler der istilaya karşıyız ama düpedüz darbe çığırkanlığı yapmak şiddeti benimsemektir, şiddete davetiye çıkartmaktır hani incinsen de incinme diyordun mesela. Hani mazlumun yanında duruyordun. Hani mazlumun yanında durmak en büyük erdemse kardeşim yani sen zalim olma. Bugün askeri darbe dediğin şeyi kim yaparsa yapsın hainliktir çünkü acizliğin göstergesidir. Ben fikren seni yenemiyorum bari şu yumruğu çakayım da bari senden iyi rekor kırayım diyorsun."

²¹ Translated into English from original: "Darbe konusunda ne düşünebilirim ki. Darbenin en büyük şeyini gerçekten de darbenin en büyük darbesini Aleviler ve solcular yemişlerdir zaman içerisinde 1980'de. 1996'da diyorlar ki en çok dincileri vurdular. Yooo..bu sefer asimilasyon iyice başladı. 80'den sonrasında..Belki hükümeti sevmiyor olabiliriz ama adamlar seçiyorlar inkar etme şansımız yok ki yüzde elli oyla geliyor adamlar. Darbeyi hayattta istemem. Çünkü bizi vurmazsa başka bir tarafı elbette vuracaktır o da insan o da insan."

informants on that resorting to force is unacceptable.

According to I.U. (52), it is the the moral teachings of the Alevi belief system that encourage them to dissociate themselves from resorting to force. She stressed the importance of socialization in the family:

Although we have been subjected to the various forms of oppression for so long, we have developed a grudge against neither the state nor other groups. It is all about the spirit of our belief. Approaching decently to any wrongdoing... This is what we learned from our elders and this is what we teach to the our children. Every single day I advise my children not to harm anybody before going out²².

G.Z. does not hesitate to reject resorting to force; however, she makes sense of her attitude within the framework of the rhetoric of state security. In keeping with this, G.Z. maintained:

We are extremely fond of our state. Hence, we never consider resorting to violence. We have never had such an opinion. How can I sell out our state? Do I have another state? How can you sell out your state, republic, Atatürk? These are our red-lines. You will not cross these red-lines. Otherwise, you lose your values, your humaneness. If you change, you lose your country. You have to protect your red-lines²³.

She did not cease to embrace the sanctity of the state discourse even in one of those instances in which the Alevis became the victim of the physical state oppression. Accordingly, she maintained:

The Dersim event was not nice. None of the massacres are nice. Yet, it was a necessity at that time. For the consolidation of the Republic, some sacrifices were needed and the Dersim was a sacrifice for the Republic. As far as the Republic is concerned, we are ready to accept even dying²⁴.

In the youth's idiom, the right to life constitutes the main source of reference while rejecting the use of force as opposed to the adult who frame the issue through a state-centric discourse. This discourse involves the defense of life for everyone without conditions.

²² Translated into English from original: "Bu ülkede yaşayan ulu pirlar öyle bir öğüt vermiş ki biz ailelerde öyle yetiştik ve yetiştiriyoruz. Çocuklarımızı sokağa çıkarken kimseye zarar vermemesine dair öğütlerde bulunuyoruz. Açıkcası sosyal mutakabat ve barışçı söylemlerle büyütüyoruz. Bu bizim inanç yapımızdan ileri gelmektedir."

²³ Translated into English from original: "Biz devletimize çok düşkünüz, anormal düşkünüz. Dolayısıyla bizde şiddet yoktur. Bizim kitabımızda o sayfa yok. Ben devletimi nasıl satayım olur mu, benim başka devletim mi var? Devlet satılır mı, cumhuriyet satılır mı, Atatürk satılır mı? Bunlar kırmızı çizgilerdir. O kırmızı çizgileri geçmeyeceksin. Geçtin mi değerlerin gider, insanlığın gider. Değiştin mi ülken gider. Bunu koruyacaksın, kırmızı çizgiyi koruyacaksın."

²⁴ Translated into English from original: "Dersim, bak kızım Dersim olayı tabi ki hoş değil. Hiç bir katliam hoş değil. İnsan öldürme ya da şey yapma hoş değil ama o zaman olması gereken oydu. Tekke ve zavilerin kapatılmasıydı. 10 tane tekke kapatıldıysa 20 tane de zaviye kapatıldı. Cumhuriyetin kurulması için bir bedel gerekiyordu. Bugün cumhuriyeti kurtarmak için canımız istense veririz bedel ne olursa olsun. Orhan Kemal'in dediği gibi ölümden öte köy yok. Cumhuriyet için ölünecekse ölürüz."

B.D. (19) rejected resorting to force within the framework of the Alevi theology and shared how some events in his memory helped to shape his stance in regard to the violence. He expressed:

In Alevi belief the greatest crime is killing somebody. Why? Because human beings are the reflections of the God in this world and you are killing the God actually. Saint Ali said that if you killed someone, you killed the whole world. Under no circumstances and for no purpose, violence to kill can be justified. But sometimes, they intend to kill you. For instance, my father's cousin was intentionally shot by a police officer in the May 1st meeting, 1995. Is this justice? At these sort of situations, people feel hurt and may take up arms. It is difficult to comment because there is real pain here. Every sort of death is painful. People are delighted when a PKK fighter was killed. Yet, they yell and cry when the soldiers are killed. What is the difference ? The dead PKK fighter has also a mother. Who wants their children to be killed! ²⁵

B.B. (17), a very young member of the Commission, commented on the some atrocities and recent unhappy events directed against the members of the Alevi community.

Although many Alevis were burnt by the fascists in Madımak, Sivas, we have never thought to take up arms. The fascist mentality continues to exist. Nowadays, some Alevi houses are being crossed. Maybe, we will live events like Madımak again but we will never take up arms. Because we believe that if there is democracy in this country, we believe in the value of communicating with others. Our tradition encourages communicating but rejects the violence²⁶.

²⁵ Translated into English from original: "Alevilikte en büyük suçlardan biri insan öldürmek. Niye çünkü sen Hakk'ın yansımasını o insanda katletmiş oluyorsun. Hazreti Ali'nin bir lafı var: 'Bir insan öldüren tüm insanlığı öldürmüş gibidir'. Ya bu ne amaç uğruna olsun bence öldürmemeli insanlar birbirini çünkü yani ne bileyim benim ona hakkım yok. O canı, o yaşamı ben ona vermemişim ki ben ondan alayım ama Kürtlerin yaptığını da ben doğru bulmamaktayım. Arkadaş otur masaya yani misal. Sonuçta bunu sadece Kürtler için de söylemiyorum. Bizim hani sol fraksiyonlarda vardır ya örneğin partizan filan. Yok öldürmeyeceksin, yani ne amaç uğruna olsun öldürmeyeceksin. Belki onlar seni...haa tepkini sunacaksın doğal olarak. Onlar seni öldürüyorlar. Benim misal babamın kuzenini 1995'te 1 Mayıs'ta vurdular. Yani bildiğin polis geldi kafasına sıktı. Yani şimdi bu adalet mi? Adalet de bekleyemiyorsun. İşte o noktada insanlar kırılıp silahı tutabiliyorlar ama işte ne kadar doğru bence doğru değil. Ama insanların tabi damarına basınca bir şey de diyemiyorsun doğal olarak çünkü acı var . Benim de elimden gelse o polisi bulsam pataklaya pataklaya öldürürüm çünkü doğal olarak canın acıyor, canından canı öldürüyorlar yani doğal olarak...Acı geliyor insana ölümün her türlü, acı değişik bir durum...Şehit cenazesi şeyi geliyor misal. İnsanlar 'oo Pkk'lı ölsün ne güzel' diyor ama kendi adamın ölünce diyorsun ki 'vay şerefsizler bizim adamımızı öldürdü'. Onun da anası var. İnsan ister mi kendi evladının lmesini."

²⁶ Translated into English from original: "Aleviler yüzyıllar boyunca hiç bir zaman silah eline silah alıp hani ben de mücadele vereyim düşüncesine kapılmamıştır. Aleviler Osmanlı döneminde kırk bin-elli bin tane Alevi kuyulara gömülmüştür, diri diri yakılmıştır, savaşa giderken Alevi Bektaşî köyün üstünden geçerken şunları da öldürün geçin denilen adamlar olmuştur. O kadar ki önemsiz bir grup olarak sayılmıştır Aleviler. Fakat Aleviler hiç bir zaman da bana böyle dedin diye sana silah çekeyim düşüncesine kapılmamıştır. Yine kapılmayacağımıza inanıyorum. Bundan 19 yıl önce nasıl Sivas Madımak'ta 30-35 kişi yandıysa yine yanar belki yine birşeyler yaparlar yine katliamcılar o faşist yapı yine devam ediyor. Belki şuanda da zaten var, evlere çarpı işareti koymalar falan. Belki ilerde bir katliam yine olur fakat binlerce olsun Aleviler hiç bir zaman silahını alıp dağa çıkmayacaktır çünkü Aleviler şuna inanıyor eğer bu ülkede bir demokrasi varsa gelin konuşalım düşüncesine inanır çünkü sohbet bizim için önemli bir yere sahiptir. Silahın bizim inancımızda bir

B.U. (35), an ethnically Kurdish Alevi, explained on what grounds he is against the Kurdish armed struggle.

I do not approve any struggle on the basis of ethnic identity or faith identity. Here, I am working about the Alevi identity but my purpose is not bring this identity to anywhere in this country. I just want to correct the wrongdoings with regard to the Alevi identity. I do not have a mission to make an interference in the outside world. Although I understand the Kurds, I do not approve any struggle which injures the well-being of others. I do not think that Kurdish armed movement will get somewhere because this is quite chaotic. There is a cycle here. Any action will always bring a reaction and this will continue. It goes nowhere²⁷.

D.Z. (30), a bilingual Alevi, prescribes an Alevi idiom for the question of peaceful coexistence of differences in the midst of all social cleavages characterizing the Turkish society:

The philosophy of "even if you are injured, do not injure" in Alevi theology does not mean to remain passive. Rather, it implies to finding an alternative instrument than the use of violence. It might involve finding the most common ground uniting the all people and rendering unimportant the identities which separate us. If the common ground is constructed around being human, it will no more become important whether you go to the mosque, I go to the cemhouse or someone else goes to the church. Otherwise, tragedy comes in²⁸.

yeri yoktur."

²⁷ Translated into English from original: "Düşünmüyorum çünkü ben etnik ya da inanç kimliği üzerinden mücadele yapmayı çok doğru bulmuyorum. Burada Alevilikle ilgili bir çalışma yapıyorum ama benim amacım Aleviliği bu ülkede bir yere getirmek değil Aleviliğin yaşamasını doğru kılmak istiyorum sadece. Dışardaki hayata müdahale etmek gibi bir misyonum olduğunu düşünmüyorum. Kürtlerin de kendi taleplerini istemesine hak veriyorum ama benim özgürlüğümün başkasının neşesini bozacak noktaya taşınmasını doğru bulmuyorum. Silahlı mücadelenin çok fazla bir işe yarayacağını düşünmüyorum ama 70'leri düşündüğümüzde ideolojik anlamda silahlı bir mücadele ayrı bir şey. Ama inanç anlamında Kürtlerin, Alevilerin, Çerkezlerin mücadelesini kardeşlik noktasında çok iyi, doğru bir yankısı olacağını düşünmüyorum. Niye düşünmüyorum çünkü ülkedeki insan malzemesinin alacağı yere yansıtacağı yer çok doğru bir yerde oturmuyor. Bir Kürt olarak ben silahlı mücadelenin doğru olduğunu düşünürüm ama bir yere varacağını düşünmem mesela. Niye düşünmem çünkü dediğim gibi bu da çok kaotik bir şey yani. Sürekli bir döngü var içerisinde . O başka bir şeyi yaratıyor, o başka bir tepkiyi yaratıyor. Böyle bir döngünün içerisinde giriyoruz. "

²⁸ Translated into English from original: "İncinsen de incitme. Ben artık çok sıklıkla şey duyuyorum 'yani incinsen de incitme sözü çok yanlış bir söz. İşte Aleviler bundan yandı etti'. Hani bu söylendiği zaman bu şey demek değil incinsen de incitme, otur yerinde hiçbir şey yapma demek değil. Başka bir yöntem bul. Yani insani bir yöntem bul. Bu demek. Yani hani insani yöntem ne işte belki yapılabilecek kendini anlatmak ya da daha doğrusu şu anlamda değil beni ... edin anlamında değil. Ama başkasıyla insan ortak paydasını bulup ve inancı o noktada şey yapmak önemsiz kılmak. Yani sen camiye gitmişsin, ben cem evine gitmişim, öbürü kiliseye gitmiş, havraya gitmiş sanane banane. Yani yukarıda bir nokta bulup ordan yani hani şeyi buradaki farklılıkları değersiz kılmak. Değersiz derken önemsiz kılmak. Çünkü payda insan kılınırsa gerçekten sorun kalmıyor ortada payda insan kılındığı zaman ama payda Alevi kılındığında payda Sünni kılındığında öbür türlü kılındığında ama her zaman için şey diye yaklaşıyorsun yaklaşıyor insanlar da bu işte ne kadar da hani şeyde olsa Alevileri öldürmek istiyor. Böyle bir şey düşmanlık besleniyor, bu damarla besleniyo payda Alevilik Sünnilik olduğunda. Paydayı yani noktayı ne kadar yukarda tutarsa insanlar bütün insanlar öyle de tutmak zorunda yani. Yoksa öbürü dram, katliam, insanlık dışı bir şey."

To sum up, the interview accounts indicate the presence of two diverse orientations within the *Dergah* differentiating along the age groups. It is a very striking point that the youth interprets the specific events from a human-centric perspective while the rhetoric of the state security or state interest shapes the stance of the adult. Among the youth, the political adversaries are considered as agents deserving civility. In other words, not all means are legitimate to achieve the desired ends in the youth's perspective. Yet, the adult does not seem to be coherent in asserting a democratic posture.

Connecting this to the debate of political culture, Ioannis N. Grigoriadis (2004) remarks that Alevi have formed the sub-political culture of their own. He maintains that

Overt support toward Atatürk and its modernization programme also crucially influenced Alevi political sub-culture. Atatürk's modernization campaign was seen as liberating Alevi from centuries of Sunni oppression and was, therefore, fully supported, despite Alevi Islam was also among the victims of Atatürk's militant secularization campaign. Alevi considered the secular Turkish republic to be much more tolerant toward them than the Islamic Ottoman Empire and identified with the programme and aims of its Kemalist elite. State-sponsored subject political culture was, therefore, often well-accepted, and the convergence of Alevi political sub-culture with the dominant one was remarkable (pp.21-22).

Interpreting the findings in parallel with the Grigoriadis' analysis, it can be argued that the Alevi youth are resistant to this state-centric Alevi political culture while the adult perfectly match with the ethos of this political culture. The distinct historical memories and political socialization of these two different generations might have produced this discrepancy.

6.3. Engaging with the Strangers

Controlling and monitoring the state authority within the scope of legitimate action might become a necessary but not a sufficient condition of acquiring the civil quality. Civility requires more than this. Civil communities accept the existence of other groups in society and show respect and tolerance for differences which might become opposed to their objectives, value systems or actions (Akman, 2012).

Civil communities are building blocks of the types of societies in which a peaceful existence of differences and social cooperation becomes possible. With regard to the Turkish context, it can be argued that Turkish society exemplifies how not to co-exist with differences. Yavuz and Özcan argues that "the main problem in Turkey is the radical polarization of society, which is an outcome of Turkey's political ethos of creating a secular and national society through the means of the state"

(2007, p.118). The Alevi community constitutes one axis of the long-lasting cleavages underlying the fabric of the Turkish society.

In this part of the study, I scrutinize how the members of the Alevi community view others in society and how they interact with others. To this purpose, as a first step, rather than being subjected to the ready-made poles of conflicts circulated in the public discourse, I asked whether or not there is any group in society with whom they have never interacted or they consider that they will never be able to interact or communicate.

It is striking that there is no single category of social group on which the responses of informants concentrate. The responses show a diversity. Each informant has a distance with members of different groups. For instance, D.Z. (30) expressed that he has the most social distance with "the young from the suburbs who wander around at least with three people" since he believes that "when these sorts of people come together, they see themselves as a center of power which is able to exercise control over everybody". For B.U. (35) and B.B. (17), *ülküçüler* is a group of people with whom communication is impossible owing to their authoritarian and repressive attitudes. For G.Z., it is the atheists with whom she hardly communicates. For I.U. (52), she stated that she has no obstacle before communicating with any category of people. There was only those extremely conservative people from Siirt in her neighborhood but she even could communicate with them in the course of time. Considering all the responses showing a wide variety, it would not be inaccurate to argue that this picture refers to a healthy state of being as they are not inclined to otherize any category of people in society on the basis of their positioning toward the Alevi identity. The communication problems that they have can not be interpreted as a part of social cleavages but they are rather personal.

Having indicated this, I inquired how the Alevi people engage with the members of other identity groups in society, starting with the members of the Sunni branch of Islam. Historically, the Sunni branch of Islam has often been positioned against the Alevi faith. The members of the Alevi community have long become "the other" of the Sunni majority and become the victims of various forms of uncivil attitudes and behaviors such as hate speech, marginalization, repression, and violence. I endeavored to investigate whether this legacy of victimhood and historical memories urge them to develop the feelings of hatred and repressive relations with the members of the Sunni Islam.

Considering my participant-observant in the field, I can safely state that my observations are

not supportive of the unfriendly relations between the Alevi and the Sunni. Rather, the general atmosphere in the *Dergah* demonstrates that the Alevi in the *Dergah* are inclined to keep open the channels of interaction and dialogue towards the Sunni. In keeping with this, I wish to share some instances of friendly interactions with the Sunni people. For instance, in one instance, a group of veiled female students from the Faculty of Religious Studies in Sakarya University visited the Shrine, participated in the *cem* ritual, and made conversation with the *Dede* regarding the differences between the Alevi faith and the Sunni Islam. In another instance, on a Sunday morning, a group of people from the Justice and Development Party visited the Shrine, had a *lokma*, and listened to the manager of the *Dergah* with regard to the problems they are experiencing.

Moreover, I heard that most of students who are benefiting from the yearly education scholarship of the *Dergah* belong to the Sunni belief. The administrators of the *Dergah* does not make discrimination on the basis of faith. Furthermore, the participants of the Youth Commission often organize the concerts and *semah* performances. The money raised from these performances are used for the education of the poor students, residing in the poor neighborhoods in the eastern regions of the country regardless of the differences in identity.

Having stated the general atmosphere in the *Dergah* with regard to the relationships with the Sunni people, I inquired their mode of interaction with the Sunni people in their personal lives. The responses show that the boundaries of interactions shaping their personal lives are not confined to the members of the Alevi community. Their narratives suggest that the members of the Sunni public are legitimate candidates to develop bonds of friendship, marriage, and economic transactions. It is worthy of note that the Sunni public does not exist as a monolithic entity in their imagination. They often make the distinction of "good Sunni-bad Sunni". For instance, the *Dede* shared one of his experiences regarding this.

I separate the Sunni community into two. Not all the Sunni people are the same. Today, there are really enlightened Sunnis who know the principles of the Alevi faith very well. They sometimes visit our cemhouses and accept their prejudices about our faith. For instance, in the past, I led a *cem* ritual in a wedding saloon in Samsun. Having completed the ritual, the mayor of the city came to me, hold my hand and said: "Today, we saw you. You mentioned about Koran, Mohammed, Ali, and all good things. I said to my wife: I am worried how we will pay the price of all wrongdoings and bad words we directed against the Alevi"²⁹.

²⁹ Translated into English from original: "Şimdi tabi Sünnileri burda ikiye ayırıyoruz. Sünnilerin bu çağımızdaki çok aydın Sünniler vardır, Aleviliği çok iyi bilen, Aleviliği çok iyi araştırmış gerçek Sünnilerle çok karşı karşıya gelmişizdir ve cemlerimize geldiler. Cemlerimizde hatalarını kendilerine ifade ederler....İki sefer Samsun'a gittim. Samsun'da bir düğün salonunda ben ibadet yaptım. Yahu Samsun'dan gelen bir belediye başkanymış ben o zaman bilemiyorum büyükşehirmiş orası. Gelirken cemden sonra orda sünni hocalar da vardı orda yani. Elimden tutarak şunu

B.U. (35) also distinguished some Sunnis from the others. He shared some of his daily encounters with the Sunni people.

When I board the minibus, I go down immediately if I see a man with beard. I lived this a few times. Because these sorts of men make you listen to religious music forcefully and too loudly. I try to understand them. They are getting board on the coach but I feel disrupted from being exposed to these sorts of music. This makes me really frightened. For instance, I sometimes see that there is a sticker on which it is written "All sovereignty belongs to the God". When I see this, I never board that coach because there is an ideological approach here which sees you as an adversary. On the other hand, I can board comfortably to the coach of a man who calls himself Muslim and conversate easily in the absence of these sorts of events. For instance, I comfortably boarded a taxi whose driver was listening to the Samanyolu FM. while coming to here³⁰.

Finally, I inquired about their attitudes on the long-lasting headscarf controversy in Turkey. Seçkinelgin maintains that "Physical appearance and dress codes have always been significant as markers of political attitudes in the Republican Turkey. Yet, the Muslim women's Islamic headscarf assumed a special position for it 'challenged the self-image of secular, Republican order of Turkish state and society' " (as cited in Saktanber, 2008, p.520). Owing to the its symbolic value, for a long time, the headscarf controversy "divided the society into complex dissident camps each of which have their own reservations about the different uses and meanings of the Islamic headscarf "(p.515). In keeping with this, I asked about their opinions on the headscarf ban in the higher education in the previous years.

With regard to the headscarf issue, there is a common pattern of thinking uniting the adult and the young. In general, all the informants interpret the veiling as an obstacle before the women's

söylemiştir: 'dede siz bugün burda yemininizde gördük, hep kurandan söz ettiniz, hep Muhammet'ten Ali'den söz ettiniz, iyilikten güzellikten söz ettiniz. Hanım'a ben dedim ki hanım görüyor musun bizim bunlara dediklerimizin vebalini ne zaman çekeceğiz, nasıl ödeyeceğiz sen onu düşün' bunu anlayan kişiler var yani."

³⁰ Translated into English from original: "Ben bir minibüse bindiğim zaman böyle sakallı adamlar oluyor ben o minibüsten iniyorum mesela iniyorum ya mesela. Niye iniyorum ben bunu 2-3 defa yaşadım minibüse biniyoruz ya ben çok fazla dediğim gibi hani çok asabi, çok sinirli bir adam değilimdir, çok yavaş sinirlenirim ama çok sinirlendiğim zamanda çok kötü şeyler yapıyorum ya dediğim gibi biniyorum arabaya ya dediğim gibi ilahi müzik dinletiyor bana. Ya şimdi hani şunu da düşünüyorum adam yani yolda gidiyor trafikte. Ben araba kullansam sevdiğim müziği dinlerim biraz rahatlamışlık anlamaya çalışıyorum onu ama tepemdeki kolonlardan onun çalınması beni rahatsız ediyor. Aslında on dakikalık yol dışında bunu şey yapmak istemiyorum çünkü gerçekten çok sinirleniyorum bu tür şeylere. Yani bilmiyorum senin aracına binmiyorum mesela görüyorum mesela 'hakimiyet Allahındır' yazıyor binmiyorum çünkü ideolojik bir yaklaşım var direk bir ideolojik yaklaşım ve seni kendine düşman olarak gören bir yaklaşım ve binmiyorum yani. Kendine müslüman diyen bir adamın arabasına çok rahatlıkla biniyorum, oturup sohbetimi de ediyorum, biniyorum, gidiyorum. Biraz önce buraya gelirken bir taksi şoförüne bindim, Samanyolu radyosunu dinliyor mesela indik efendice indik geldik yani çok böyle şey yapmıyor."

liberation. However, it does not preclude them to show respect to the veiled women's choices. They stated that they do not deliberately endeavor to socially dissociate themselves from the veiled women. With regard to the ban on the universities, they declared that the veiled women should not be refused to have an access to university education. However, they have some reservations regarding the public visibility of the headscarf. That's to say, they are concerned with the public officials' wearing headscarf on the ground that the Alevi subjects might become subject to discrimination.

Ethnic confrontation between Kurds and Turks constitutes one of the greatest social cleavages dividing the society into contending poles. The widespread presence of the violence within the conflict for years has increased anti-Kurdish beliefs among the Turkish society. The agony of the human loss and the strong anti-Kurdish beliefs have made difficult the talk of the Kurdish democratic demands for a long time. Particularly speaking, Ergin and Dixon maintain that "cultural issues, such as language and education, are at the heart of the Kurdish issue in Turkey" (2010, p.1332).

In keeping with this, I strived to inquire the attitudes of the Alevis about the Kurds during the interview. To this purpose, I asked about their opinions on the Kurdish demand for education in mother tongue. The main concern in this question was to find out whether the Alevis show feelings of empathy and understanding towards the Kurdish demands owing to the their being two historically oppressed groups under the Republic or they become distanced from the Kurdish demands, holding to the state-centric discourses of the dominant public culture.

The interview excerpts demonstrate that the adult Alevi's stance with regard to the Kurdish education is highly shaped by the "state-sponsored political culture", grounded on the principles of Kemalism. A state-centric rhetoric manifests itself in their interpretation of the Kurdish political demands. Ergün and Dixon's study on the anti-Kurdish beliefs reveals some findings in parallel with this. Accordingly, they conclude that "secular Turks are more likely than their counterparts to hold anti-Kurdish beliefs...Secularism in Turkey has historically been linked with the Kemalist ideology and its emphasis on cultural modernization. Secular Turks likely feel that Kurds are a cultural impediment to this process" (p.1343). Considering the fact that the adult Alevis are supportive of Kemalism and particularly secularism, it might have an influence on their anti-Kurdish beliefs.

The *Dede* resists to the Kurdish education on the ground that Kurdish has not reached the level of a national language. It is not capable of being a language of science. Also, the plurality of

vernacular Kurdish dialects makes impossible the communication among the Kurds from different regions. Moreover, I.U. (52) argued that:

Education and instruction are totally different things. If education is delivered in another language, there should be a separate state as well. Kurdish education can only be given in a Kurdish state. But, there might be Kurdish instruction like German, French, Japan, and so on. You can give Kurdish as a foreign language in schools. But if you want to have a complete Kurdish education system, you should separate your state as well³¹.

Furthermore, G.Z., a Turkish Alevi who knows Kurdish very well, stated that there is no obstacle before the Kurds having education in Turkish comfortably because the majority of the Kurds know Turkish very well and only a small minority living in the remote villages can not speak Turkish. She seems to be unwilling to develop a feeling of empathy with the Kurds although she stated that she came from the Kurdish speaking regions and observed the Kurds' experiences from the first hand.

On the other hand, the stance of the youth strikingly differs from the adult's stance on this issue. The participants of the Youth Commission interpreted the Kurds demand to education in mother tongue within a framework of rights and freedoms. Accordingly, they stressed that one's access to education in his/her mother tongue is a fundamental right in their vision. In their emphasising with the Kurdish young, two factors might become influential to make a difference: their understanding of common experiences of being oppressed and a willingness for coexistence arising from their holding intersectional identities of Kurdishness and Aleviness. The majority of the youth expressed that one of their parents are from Kurdish origin. For instance, B.U. (35), who defines himself as a Kurdish Alevi, criticizes most of the Alevi community on the ground that they fail to make an empathy with the Kurds. He states:

Since the most Alevi equates Alevism with Kemalism, they consider that the Kurdish education will lead to the separation of the country. This is a paranoia. They could not emphasise with the Kurds. I am asking them: Imagine that one day a state representative comes and says "you will no more worship in Turkish but you will worship in Japanese" or "you will no more make cem ritual but you will make another ritual". How would you feel? The people in the head of the Alevi institutions are not democratic at this point³².

³¹ Translated into English from original: "Eđitim farklı đretim farklı bir Őey. Eđitim farklı dilde olursa o zaman devlet de olması lazım. O başka bir Őey. Yani Krte eđitim verdiđiniz zaman Krt devletimizin olması lazım. Krte đretim olabilir, Almanca, İngilizce, Fransızca, Japonca gibi. đretim farklıdır bir yabancı dil olarak Krteyi koyabilirsiniz o farklı bir durum. Ama tamamen ben Krte eđitim sistemi istiyorum dediđiniz zaman o zaman devletinizi de blmeniz gerekir."

³² Translated into English from original: "Aleviler diyorum Alevi kurumlarını bilemiyorum onların hemen hemen hepsi Alevilik eđittir Kemalizm politikasını gttkleri iin bu byle tipik bir blclk lkenin blnmesini temel tařları olarak grylar. O empatiyi geliřtirmediler. Biri gelip bize deseki ya kardeřim cemevlerinde rnek veriyorum bundan sonra Trke ibadet etmeyeceksin

B.B. (17), a very young Alevi whose mother is a Zaza-speaking Alevi, touches upon the difficulties which are being experienced by the Kurdish children in schools.

I am sometimes thinking the Kurdish children living in Diyarbakır, Muş, and so on. Until the age of six or seven, they always speak Kurdish. But when they begin to primary school, they encounter with the Turkish. Without knowing no single Turkish word, these children are supposed to say things in Turkish. It is like educating these people in English without knowing English. This is a very difficult situation. Thus, the education in mother tongue is a right³³.

Also, the young people expressed that they would be very willing to learn Kurdish if the education system is modified accordingly.

6.4. Engaging with the Members

The last but not the least important dimension of the civility is the form of tolerance which the participants show the internal dissent. Norton argues that "it is as relevant to look for civility within associations as it is to observe it between them. Ironically, groups that espouse democracy and other commendable values often do not exemplify these values internally" (1993, p.214). The social actors fall into uncivil forms of interaction when the majority tends to silence the voicing of the internal dissent no matter how they are tolerant of the external differences (Akman, 2012, p.333). Hence, a consideration of internal civility is important in evaluating the social actors' mode of interaction along with the other criteria.

Under this dimension of civility, there are three topics which I want to problematize with regard to the Alevis in the *Dergah*. The topics successively involve the treatment of those Alevis who are ethnically different from the majority within the discussions revolving around the ethnic boundaries of the Alevi identity, treatment of those Alevis who are part of marginal gender identities, and treatment of the internal dissent particularly within the Youth Commission.

With the reinvention of the identity in the 1990s, the Alevi intellectuals have begun to thematize several issues with regard to the boundaries of the Alevi identity. Among them, ethnic

biz size Japonca şey yapacağız bunu düşünün acaba ne olur bize deseler ki bundan sonra cem yapmayın gidin şu ibadeti yapın yani böyle bir düşünce içerisinde. Alevi kurumlarının yöneticileri bu noktada çok demokratik davranmıyorlar kibarca söylüyorum."

³³ Translated into English from original: "Şimdi şöyle düşünüyorum bu yeni yeni başlayan çocuklar atıyorum Diyarbakır'da Muş'ta falan anneden babadan hep gördüğü dil Kürtçe bir dil. Çocuk 6 yaşına kadar Kürtçe bir dil duyuyor hiç bir Türkçe kelime duymuyor ve ilkokulda 1. sınıfta Ali Ayşe gel buraya diyor ve bu çocuk farkına bile varmıyo çok zor birşey. 1.sınıftaki bir çocuğa nasıl İngilizce okuma yazma öğretemeyeceğimize göre Türkçe de zordur. Anadilde eğitime ben katılıyorum, özerklik de hakkıdır bence."

boundaries of the identity has emerged one of the most debated issues in a time of contending nationalisms. It was mostly a discussion which takes place among the intellectuals, though. This discussion has divided the Alevi intellectuals into two dissident camps each of which interprets the identity around one particular ethnic identity³⁴. One group of intellectuals have argued that the only ethnic identity of the Alevi has been historically Turkishness and those Alevis who call themselves as Kurds actually belong to the Turkish origin, which were assimilated into the Kurdishness in the course of time. Other groups of intellectuals have refused this stance and supported that the Kurds have been historically legitimate followers of the Alevi belief.

Projecting the image of this debate on the *Dergah*, it is possible to discern the presence of two distinct patterns of thinking, intersecting with the fault-lines underlying the adult-youth confrontation. The circle involving the Dede and Alevi intellectuals affiliated with the Dergah tend to consider the Alevi belief as a historical and cultural product of the ethnically Turkish people. For the *Dede*, there is no room for doubt regarding the Turkishness of the Alevis. He explains the presence of Kurdish-speaking Alevis with the acculturation of the Turkish Alevis in the historically Kurdish speaking lands.

On the other side, the young Alevis do not take a stand in this discussion because they believe that these are political discussions which have been propagated by the nationalist movements of Turks and Kurds in order to receive the support of the Alevis in achieving their desired-ends. Rather than reducing the Alevi identity to one ethnic core, they are inclined to view the Alevi belief as a common product of diverse cultural groups which have lived in Anatolia for centuries, epitomized in their discourse, "the multicultural garden" (*çok kültürlü bahçe*). Particularly, they maintain that defining the Alevi identity over the Turkish culture is not reasonable while considering the intense intercultural interactions among peoples of different origins in a culturally diverse context. With regard to this, B.D.(19) stated:

On the one hand, we say that we do not make discrimination. On the other hand, we reduce the Alevi identity to the Turkishness. This is contradictory. Yes, at the beginning its origins might be the Turkic people in the central Asia. However, when the Alevi Turkic people come to the Anatolia, they closely engaged in the Kurds and Armenians. There happened intermarriages between these people. How we call *Nusayris*, Arabic Alevis? They define themselves as Alevi. They believe in that way. Won't we call them as Alevi? What about Bektashi people living in Bulgaria and Greece who do not know any Turkish but practicing the belief in their own languages?³⁵

³⁴ For a detailed discussion, please see : http://www.cemalsener.com/cs_tr/kitapayrinti1.asp?id=16 and http://www.navkurd.net/nivisar/mehmet_bayrak/alevi_kurt.htm

³⁵ Translated into English from original: "İnsanı ayırt etmiyoruz diyoruz sen Aleviliğin kökünü illa ki Türkmenliğe bağlıyorsun. Tamam özü Türkmen olabilir ama daha sonrasında Anadoluya

B.U.(35) added:

This discussion does not concern the Alevi community because we have not been interested in these kinds of discussions so far. Looking at the sacred sources of the tradition which were posed centuries ago, there is no such discussion. Our saints did not engage in discussions of "I am Turk, I am Kurd, or I am a Cherkess". If it had not been a concern of the saints of the tradition, why should it concern me? The essence of the tradition is very obvious: affection of the brothers and sisters³⁶.

Thus, the adult Alevis are drawn to take a side on the political discussions of the different nationalisms. In opposition to the adult's stance, the young Alevis embrace an ethnically inclusive interpretation of Alevi identity by going beyond the ethnic interpretations, probably having its source in their becoming a part of intersectional identities.

In recent years, some studies and media coverages show that very few people are willing to interact with the people of sexual minority, particularly in their neighborhoods (Esmer, 1999; Selek, 1998). Contrary to the nation-wide survey results, in this study, all the informants used an inclusive, open, and tolerant discourse with regard to a possibility of sharing the space of faith with the people of sexual minority. I asked them how they would react if the parents of an Alevi transsexual woman demanded them to carry out the funeral ceremony of this person in the *Dergah*. A very widespread discourse uniting all the participants of the *Dergah* was that "Entering this gate, we leave behind our gender identity. People have only one identity within this Shrine. Simply, we are humans".

I.U. (52) is the director of the Shrine who is in the position of supervising the Shrine's entrance and exit. When I asked her, she did not see any problem in this. She also shared an

geldiğinde senin ailelerin Ermenilerle iç içe olmuş, evlenmişsin, gelin vermişsin, kız vermişsin, damat almışsin Kürtlerle. Yani şimdi Arap Nusayrilere Alevi demeyecek miyiz. Biz demezsek de adamlar öyle inanıyor. Hatay'da yaşayanlar, Bulgaristan'a çık, Yunanistan'a falan çık adamlar belki Yunan olabilir ama adam Bektaşî ve bu inancı bizden daha iyi sürdürüyor çoğu Türkçe hiç bilmiyor ama Bektaşîliği Aleviliği ben ayırt etmiyorum Bektaşîler Aleviliği gerçekten özünde yaşıyorlar. Şimdi ben Aleviyim o Alevi değil demek en büyük yanlış. Onun da sebebi zannedersen bu kültür içindeki veya ortamın siyasi durumu. Biraz daha kendilerini biraz daha yükseltmek için zannedersen çünkü dediğim gibi benim babaannem misal Zaza şimdi Alevi değil mi benim babaannem?"

³⁶ Translated into English from original: "Aleviliği ilgilendiren bir şey değildir çünkü Aleviler bunlarla ilgilenmemiştir. Aleviler bu güne kadar yani şeye bakıyoruz o Aleviliğin kutsal metni kitabı, değişlerine falan bakıyoruz yüzyıllar önce yazılmış hiçbir kaynakta 'ben Kürtüm', 'ben Türküm', 'ben Çerkezim' deyip ortaya çıkmamıştır. 'Muhabbet insanı canım muhabbeti' demiş adam bu kadar açık yani. Hani bu insanlar yüzyıllardır bununla ilgilenmemiş o zaman bize ne? Beni ilgilendirmiyor ki. Yani ben bir insanla, senle oturup konuşurken hiçbir zaman şunu yapmadım kimle olursa olsun 'a merhaba nasılsın, iyi misin nerelisin?' böyle abuk sabuk bir bilinç var dünyamızda anlatabiliyor muyum? Bu beni ilgilendirmez Alevileri de ilgilendirmez ama Alevileri ilgilendiriyor mesela."

experience of her with the thinner-addicted children in order to show the sincerity of her response.

There is no problem in the transvestites' visiting here. The thinner-addicted children are as socially excluded as the transvestites. Four or five children as such often visit here. Me and they became friends. We lived an interesting event with them. Recently, they were here and ingesting thinner in the garden. I went next to them and asked "why are you making me sad? Did not I say to you that you can always come here to eat your dinner and have some tea without paying?" and they regretted and ceased to ingesting. I did not allow the security to involve in. While they are leaving, they looked at me and said "if anybody injures you, let us know". Thus, this shrine is open to these sorts of socially excluded people. Why not transvestites?³⁷

G.Z. is the head of the Women's Commission in the Shrine. She also actively works in the Women's branch of the Republican People's Party and takes initiatives in collaboration with other women organizations in Istanbul. When I asked her whether she defines herself as a feminist, she rejected being a feminist on the ground that she cannot approve a movement as such which is "so radical, unable to reconcile with the values of society, too focused on individual rights, disconnected from the real problems of the underprivileged women and promotes values disregarding the fabric of the family". Then, I asked what she is thinking of the transsexuals and also asked how she would react if her prospective grandchild declares his/her homosexuality.

Contrary to her previous position in support of the family ethos, she uses an inclusive discourse with regard to the people of sexual minority. Although it seems, *prima facie*, to be a contradiction with the image of conservative woman, it is not so much a contradiction in fact because her inclusive approach of the people of sexual minority reflects an image of the tender-hearted mother. She views homosexuality as an anomaly. Yet, if homosexuality appears as an anomaly, she argued that the parents are guilty of this state of being owing to being wrong role model. By using the rhetoric of motherhood, she refuses the social exclusion of the homosexuals. With regard to the origins of homosexuality, her views are highly shaped by the prevailing public discourses. However, with regard to the mode of interaction, she uses a more tolerant language. Considering the presence of some homosexual friends in G.Z.'s milieu and her gender identity,

³⁷ Translated into English from original: "Hiç bir sorun yok bunda. Buraya sokakta yatan tinerçiler geliyor. 4 yada 5 tinerçi çocuk gelir buraya ki toplumun en çok reddettiği tinerçi çocuklardır. Onlar gelir ve benimle ilişkileri çok iyi. Hatta çok ilginç bir şey oldu. Geçenlerde buraya gelmişler ve bahçede tiner çekiyorlardı yanlarına gidip onlara dedim ki 'Beni niye üzüyorsunuz? Ben size ne dedim buraya geldiğinizde yemeğinizi yiyeceksiniz, çayınızı içeceksiniz ve sizden ücret alınmayacak demedim mi?' diyince 'haklısın abla' diyip hemen ellerindekileri torbalara koydular. Hatta önce güvenlik müdahale etmek istedi. Ben üniformaya tepki verebilecekleri ihtimalini düşünerek izin vermedim. Toparlandıktan sonra arkamdan geldiler, hatta yöneticimiz Hüseyin Beyi görünce bana dediler ki: 'Abla burada sana yamuk yapan olursa haberimiz olsun' dediler. Kısacası bu dergaha toplumun dışladığı (korktuğu çekindiği bu kesimdir) böyle insanlar bile gelip gidebiliyorlar. Bu dergah böyle bir yer, hatta buranın girişindeki kitabede yazdığı gibi 'öyle bir garip konak ki dostlar, sahipsiz değil' yani bir bekçisi var, ama kimsenin malı da değil. Ama her zaman buranın sahibi çıkmış."

G.Z.'s stance is in parallel with the findings of many researches studying the origins of negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Accordingly, women have more positive attitudes toward homosexuality in general than do men (Anderssen, 2002; Whitley, 1990) Moreover, according to Allport's contact hypothesis, social contact with a stigmatized group should result in a positive attitude change (as cited in Çırakoğlu, 2006).

The social contact hypothesis also explains the B.D.'s (19) stance. He stated that he would see everyone as equals after coming through the *Dergah's* door. He expressed that he had a chance to have a conversation with gays and lesbians in a project against all forms of discrimination in which he participated as a member of a another stigmatized identity. An understanding of common experiences of oppression with the people of sexual minority may also explain this. B.D. (19) stated that after that talk, he ceased to use pejorative words stigmatizing the people of sexual minority. B.U.(35) also explained his positive attitude towards the people of sexual minority. He stated that

These people are among the categories of people who will give the least harm to the humanity. I really believe in this. Because their state of being oppressed makes these people more likely to empathise with others who are suffering and they have often more fragile and indulgent personality types. For that reason, they are less likely to injure others³⁸.

Therefore, the youth together with the adult have not a tendency to stigmatize and otherize the people of sexual minority contrary to the general tendency in the public.

As a final point, I will endeavor to focus on the group dynamics of the Youth Commission with regard to the question of civility. Although the young are successful at developing a non-repressive and non-authoritarian relationship with the strangers, there is a need for scrutinizing the youth's internal group dynamics before qualifying them as a civil actor. Considering the organization of the Youth around a deliberative space, the mode of engagement with the group members needs to be sought within the deliberation processes. Discursive spaces can become subject to various types of domination processes. The questions of "who speak", "how much", and "how one speaks" might reveal the dynamics of the domination processes within a given discursive space (Talpin, 2007, p.207).

³⁸ Translated into English from original: "Ben insanın iyi ya da kötü olmasına bakarım. Kimliği beni asla ilgilendirmez. Şunu da söyleyeyim, insana en az zarar verecek insanlar da aslında bu tür insanlardır. Buna çok inanıyorum. Hem ezilmişliklerinden dolayı daha iyi empati kurabilirler insanlarla hem de kişilikleri dolayısıyla daha kırılğan daha ince daha zarif olurlar yani. Ben bu yüzden bu dünyada insanlığa en az zarar verecek insanların onlar olduğuna inanırım."

In principle, owing to the eradication of the differences in status, all participants in the Youth Commission have an equal chance to express their opinions and to influence the decisions to be taken. However, in practice, not all the participants have an equal "feeling of entitlement to speak" (Talpin, 2007, p.208). This is because of the participants' perception that people have varying degrees of "epistemological authority" which means some people are more convincing than others in the eyes of the people (Talpin, 2007, p.208). Generally, the participants bearing a high degree of "epistemological authority" are the seniors, the more experienced, the more educated, the more competent at communication skills, and the more confident in ability of the self-expression. D.Z. (30), a former participant who broke off with the Commission, expressed that:

I had difficulties in expressing my stance. I behaved cowardly until the last day. This is because you do not want to argue. You do not want to live that tension. Because there is a really strong language, a sophistication, a competence on communication. Because you observed previously how people were ashamed before this language. You are worried with not being able to defend what you want to defend or not expressing it well enough³⁹.

In general, this situation yields us a picture in that while a competent minority unintentionally dominates the discussions, the participants with less competence and fewer resources remain as passive followers. In result, the discourse of the competent minority remains unchallenged and internalized by others which precludes the emergence of a considerable dissidence within the group. The interview excerpts, which reveal that there is no significant disagreement among the members, confirm this statement.

Thus, the Youth Commission is not immune from the internal power relations. Yet, these power relations are not a product of intentional or conscious processes. Rather, this is a result of deep disparities among the personal qualifications of the participants. The circumstances inevitably bring some participants into prominence. However, this never turns to be an instrument for the repression of the dissidence as long as the dissidents do not violate the constitutive principles of the Commission, which require staying away from the efforts to dissolve the group like invoking

³⁹ Translated into English from original: "Ben mesela toplantıda bunu ifade etmişim. En son böyle tartışıp ayrıldığımız toplantıda şunu da ifade etmişim. Evet, ben kendini ifade edemeyen bir insandım ve bugüne kadar da korkakça davrandım biliyorum çünkü şey yani insan bunu hissediyor, yani tartışmak istemiyor, o gerilimi yaşamak istemiyor çünkü çok böyle şey var, kuvvetli bir şey var dil olarak da yetenek olarak da kuvvetli, yani dilsel yetenek anlamında da çok kuvvetli insan var karşında. Çünkü geçmiş pratiğinde örneklerini yaşamışsın, rezil olmuş yani karşındaki tanım yerindeyse rezil olmuş. Ama tabi hatalı olduğundan ya da şey olduğundan. İnsan şimdi hani senin savunmak istediğin şeyi savunamamaktan ya da onu yeterli derecede ifade edememekten korkuyor. Bunun başka tarafa çekilmesinden korkuyor ve sonrasında ben bunu toplantıda bu itirafı bütün arkadaşlarıma da yaptım, ordaki bütün arkadaşlarıma. Şunu çok rahat söyledim dedim ki ben korkuyordum ama bugün değil, bugün bunu rahatlıkla ifade edebiliyorum."

schism, gossiping, and "being no one's man".

6.5. Conclusion

Therefore, it is the argument of this thesis that the *Şahkulu* Youth has not only exemplified the idea of how the forms of organized communication help the underprivileged groups to formulate and circulate their discourses but also epitomized the example of how-to-coexist with differences in a society as such even under circumstances where the citizens are, once again, polarized into the dissident camps cutting mainly the secular-conservative and Turkish-Kurdish cleavages. The particular components underlying the youth's normative orientations toward differences can be summarized as follows: 1) the ways in which the youth deal with differences in cultural and political contestation drift apart the state-centric/Kemalist/Republican stance characterizing the wider Alevi public, 2) in dealing with the state authority, the youth displays an outright rejection of the instruments (armed struggle and coup d'etat) which might lead to the construction of an extra-legal authority even though these means provide them an advantage in the political contestation, 3) the youth lacks a categorical antagonist-formed on the basis of identity and the Sunnis do not exist as a category of "other" in their imagination in spite of being inherited a memory of victimhood from the past generations and exposed to the unpleasant experiences of being a member of a historically stigmatized group, 4) being members of intersectional oppressed identities help them to interpret the Kurdish political demands with a rights-based perspective and to detach the Alevi identity from its ethnic boundaries, 5) experiencing the burden of being a part of an oppressed identity also help them to understand and empathize with other oppressed groups in society, 6) yet, the youth can not avoid falling into the internal power relations owing to their incapacity to defuse the dramatic discrepancies among the "epistemological authority" of different participants.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1. A Summary of Findings

The fundamental objective of this thesis was to scrutinize the nature of micro social processes of power at community level in a particular space to question the legitimacy of the prevalent assumptions of civil society with regard to who should constitute civil society and how the experiences of the underprivileged are to be addressed. It is thus through an in-depth-analysis of informal youth activism within a politics of place-its dynamics, complexities, interactions, contestations, and normative orientations-that I have endeavored to "show how an idea with its origins in European intellectual discourse has very different referents in non-European cultural traditions" (Hann, 1996, p.2). Then, what does this empirical case study of informal activism of the Alevi youth in the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı* reveal?

First and foremost, it is the argument of this thesis that the Alevi youth has successfully constructed a counter public within the *Dergah* to formulate their oppositional interpretations of Alevi identity and grievances with regard to the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by the people in power position while simultaneously constructing itself as an embryonic counter public vis-a-vis the general Alevi counter public. In response to exclusions by centers of authority within the *Dergah*, the *Şahkulu* Youth Commission has brought pressure to bear on the authorities so as to eradicate unjust power hierarchies within a dialectic of two functions: a "space of withdrawal and regroupment" and a "base and training ground for agitational activities directed towards wider publics" (Fraser, 1992, p.124). Particularly, within a discursive space of their own, the Youth Commission has accomplished tasks of self-mobilization, socialization, autonomous association, public communication, invention and circulation of identity discourses, creation of influence through an unconstrained rational discussion, and pressuring for accountability that have ultimately entitled the youth to emerge as a legitimate civil society actor. Nevertheless, the degree of youth's efforts at the sophistication of the communicative action will determine whether it will remain as a reactive movement or become an autonomous subject within the wider Alevi public.

However, this thesis has gone beyond studying civil society through ontological components. Rather, it has combined the ways in which people deliberate, cooperate, and take action regarding their common interests with to what extent people engage in non-repressive

engagement with differences in state, society and the group itself. This is because uncivil orientations of the actors might lead to the self-destruction of civil society. With regard to this, the Alevi youth has built such a capacity of civility that epitomizes how-to-coexist with differences in a culturally diverse society as such. Particularly, whilst the youth abstains from any illegality which might disregard the rule of law and legitimate state authority, at the same time its vocabulary of emotions and attitudes do not involve the feelings of hatred, fanaticism, intolerance, repression, and violence in their interaction with others. Thus, despite the fact of being inherited a memory of victimhood from the past generations and exposed to the unpleasant experiences of being a member of a historically stigmatized group, the Alevi youth might help to raise hopes to accomplish a peaceful coexistence of differences in a social context where the society is polarized into dividing camps.

7.2. Some Implications and New Directions?

Civil society is a notion which pertains to the historicity of the "West". That's to say, it is a product of the Western modernity which is based on a culture specific to a particular time and space (Neyzi, 2001, p.411). Nevertheless, it has recently gained a currency across the world owing to the processes of globalization. This situation has produced a puzzle of how to examine civil society outside the Western societies. This study supports that examining civil society in these societies in the way we judge in the Euro-American context shall yield "a long list of the absents" (Akşit, Cengiz, Küçükural, Tol, 2003, p.44). This is because experiences of modernity might show differences outside the Western context. In other words, there is not one but many modernities (Neyzi, 2001, p.411). Considering the case of Turkey, although the Turkish historicity has been penetrated by the processes of the Western historicity in a significant degree, the Western models of civil society could not fully explain the dynamics of civil society or structures showing resemblance to civil society in Turkey (Akşit, Cengiz, Küçükural, Tol, 2003, p.46). The penetration of the Western processes of modernity into the Turkish context might have caused an interaction of the culturally specific institutions with the western models of institutions and ultimately led to the coexistence of different social institutions in the same social context.

In this study, I endeavored to make an empirical analysis of a social institution, the *Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı*, which has a unique status. Historically, it has functioned as a Bektashi shrine for almost six centuries. Today, it carries out a dual dunction. On the one hand, it functions as a place of faith (maintaining its historical function) and involve a rich web of informal social relationships

developed around the faith identity. On the other hand, it functions as a formal civil society organization under the title of foundation and an administrative body. By virtue of these properties, it is possible to argue that it is a hybrid institution, epitomizing both the components of Western and Turkish historicities. Thus, this study is significant in terms of showing that an analysis of civil society outside the Euro-American context will be imperfect without considering contextual idiosyncracies.

New studies of civil society in Turkey might shed further light on context-specific practices of civil society as the *Dergah*. Such studies might explore, for instance, examples of micro-spaces below the direct scrutiny of the state authority (suburban or rural neighbourhoods, informal women networks, various cultural rituals or ceremonies), various life contexts of the underprivileged people which is conducive to the formation of networks of social activism or the spaces where the realms of faith and social activism might be interpenetrated (mosques, shrines, churches, or other places of faith). For instance, such a fieldwork can be carried out on the possible networks formed around the mosques to reach a comparative understanding of the role of faith centers in forming networks of social relationships, spaces of deliberation and various forms of social activism.

So far, the cemhouses or Alevi places of faith have appeared as a contentious object of identity politics in the public discourses of diverse identity projects. The construction and operation of the Alevi places of faith have very often faced with the restrictions by official authorities. With this thesis, the Alevi places of faith have been immigrated to a different context. Cemhouses have often been discussed in relation to its religious dimension. However, this study shows that these places have a great deal of capacity to encourage socialization, communication and civic engagement particularly among the young people. In other words, they function as "a school of democracy" where young people learn how to voice their opinions, propositions, or criticisms. Considering very low levels of civic engagement among the youth in Turkey, Alevi places of faith are quite influential to encourage youth's civic participation.

Apart from its significance for the current discussions of civil society in Turkey, this study might also open new directions for the study of youth in Turkey. The experiences of the Alevi youth raise doubts on the representation of the youth in the post-1980 public discourse. The activism of the youth in the *Dergah* yields a picture which challenges the image of the youth as "selfish, individualistic, apolitical consumers" (Neyzi, 2001, p.424). The story of the youth in the *Dergah* epitomizes how they have actively challenged "the established hierarchy between elders and

juniors, and the mission imposed on them by adult society" and how they responded their exclusion from institutional spaces by forming "alternative spaces and forms of mobilization" (Neyzi, pp.426-27). This suggests that the Alev young in the *Dergah* have successfully constructed themselves as a subject against their objectification by the adult Alevi society. Neyzi informed in her article, 2001 dated, that "The process of transition of Turkish youth from object to subject is still in the making". This study goes a step further and reveals the actualization of this transformation of the youth from the object to subject from inside of the Alevi community. Whether or not this is a development concerning the wider Alevi youth needs a further investigation. Yet, if this is the case, it might become a precursor of a wave of change in the wider Alevi community.

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