

THE MOTIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN TURKEY IN VENUE
SELECTION FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

by

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THE MOTIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN TURKEY IN VENUE
SELECTION FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: youth political participation, political parties, NGO, civic engagement, constitution-writing

This study aims to explore the determinants of the venue selection for youth political participation. The research question of the study is “*What are the motives of young people in Turkey in deciding their venue for political participation?*” In addition, the sub questions aim to discover the young people’s stories of political involvement, their opinions about the institution they are involved in, their political activities in their organizations and through those institutions, their involvement in ongoing constitution-making process in Turkey.

The findings reveal that the determinants of young people’s venue selection include their families or the social group they belong to, and their definition and expectations from politics. They also reflect the similarities and differences between different organizations. Lastly, the study concludes with suggestions for further research.

The first part explains the aims of this study and its contributions to the literature. In the second part, the comprehensive literature review consists of the different definitions of the concept of youth, and continues with youth political participation both in general and in Turkey and the literature on constitution-making and political participation. In the third part, the focus group research design, case selection and data analysis used in this study is explained. The fourth part consists of the in-depth analysis of focus group data both summarizing the focus group interviews and presenting highlighting themes arising from discussions. In the last part, the highlighting themes of focus groups are compared and contrasted, and the discussion on the current study is presented.

ÖZET

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ GENÇLERİN SİYASAL KATILIM ALANINI SEÇMELERİNDEKİ ETKENLER

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Anahtar Kelimeler: gençlerin siyasal katılımı, siyasi partiler, sivil toplum kuruluşları, sivil katılım, anayasa yazımı

Bu çalışma Türkiye'deki gençlerin siyasal katılım alanını seçmelerindeki etkenleri keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki gençlerin siyasi katılım alanlarını seçimindeki etkenlerin araştırılmasını amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın araştırma sorusu "Türkiye'deki gençlerin siyasi katılım alanlarını seçmelerindeki etkenler nelerdir?" olarak belirlenmiştir. Alt sorular ise gençlerin siyasal katılım hikayelerini, dahil oldukları kurum hakkındaki düşüncelerini, o kurumlardaki aktivitelerini ve o kurumlar aracılığıyla Türkiye'de devam eden anayasa yazım sürecine katılımlarını keşfetmeyi amaçlar.

Sonuçlar gençlerin siyasi katılım alanı seçiminde ailelerin, dahil oldukları sosyal grubun, onların politika tanımlarının ve politikadan beklentilerinin belirleyici olduğunu göstermektedir. Aynı zamanda, sonuçlar farklı kurumlar arasındaki benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları da ortaya koymaktadır. Son olarak, bu çalışma ileride yapılacak araştırmalar için önerileri de içermektedir.

İlk bölümde, bu çalışmanın amaçları ve literatüre katkılarından bahsedilmektedir. İkinci bölümde, kapsamlı literatür taraması gençlik konseptinin farklı tanımlarını, genel olarak ve özelde Türkiye'de gençlik siyasi katılımını ve anayasa yazımı ve siyasi katılım üzerine kısa bir literatür taramasını içerir. Üçüncü bölümde, odak grup çalışma planı, kurumların seçimi ve veri analizi yöntemleri açıklanmaktadır. Dördüncü bölümde odak grup görüşmelerinin ayrıntılı analizi hem görüşmelerin özetlenmesi ile hem de tartışmalardaki belirgin temaların anlatılması ile sunulmuştur. Son bölümde ise, odak grup görüşmelerinin belirgin temaları karşılaştırılmış ve bu çalışma ile ilgili tartışma sunulmuştur.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The constitutional regulations and the military rule between 1980 and 1983 strictly limited the space for political participation in Turkey. The constitution drafted under military rule in early 1980s is still into force and the remnants of the militaristic culture in political life remain as the biggest obstacles before fully democratic political participation. Hence, despite the size of the young population, the youth political participation in Turkey remains limited.

The military coup in 1980 did not only ban the political parties, but also any sort of organizations. It had taken seventeen years for youth branches of political parties to become active again. Moreover, the state influenced families to raise apolitical children, since political activism was linked to anarchism at the time.

Despite the low level of youth political participation in Turkey today, young people are still eager to be involved in politics and decision-making processes. Those who are involved follow different paths. There are a variety of motivations for young people to choose their venue for political participation. They either work in political party branches or the civil society organizations.

Even though the studies on youth in Turkey have been developing lately, they still remain limited. If we consider the size of the young population in Turkey, this unique sociological group is more important today than they were before.

With the inspiration I got from *Gençler Tartışıyor: Siyasete Katılım, Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri*¹, a study exploring young people's tendencies in political participation this study is going to focus on their motivations and the determinants of the venue selection in youth political participation in Turkey.

With this aim, I have conducted four focus group studies with young people from different organization in Turkey. These organizations include the youth branches

¹ Boyraz, Cemil (2008), *Gençler Tartışıyor: Siyasete Katılım, Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri*, İstanbul: TÜSES.

AKP (Justice and Development Party) and BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) and Habitat Center for Development and Governance, and LambdaIstanbul.

In addition to the motivations of young people to participate in politics, I also look at their activities regarding their involvement in constitution-writing process in Turkey. As the limits of political participation are drawn by constitutions, the current study looks at young people's involvement in this process in order to evaluate the dimensions of their political participation and their involvement in this process which is directly linked to their limits of participation.

It should be noted that the focus of the study is not the role of young people in constitution-making process, but rather it looks at their involvement in this democratic process as a reference point. Despite its significant impact on political participation, the current process provides us the opportunity to analyze how different motivations shape political participation practices.

1.1 The Significance of the Study

In a country like Turkey with huge young population², youth policies become very important. In order to make efficient youth policies and overcome the problems young people face in Turkey, young people's political participation and involvement in decision-making processes deserve attention. In this respect, exploring the motives of young people in venue selection is important both to understand young people and their perspectives and expectations from political participation, and to make better youth policies as a whole.

The theoretical significance of the study is based on its contribution to the empirical studies on youth in Turkey, which remain limited and deserve more attention. The studies on youth political participation in Turkey have focused on either their motivations to be involved in politics or young people in different organizations, but this study aims to solely explore similarities and/or differences in motivations of young

² According to Youth Statistics 2011 by TURKSTAT, young people in Turkey consist of 16.8 per cent of the total population. For more information, see also <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=13133>

people for venue selection by involving different organizations in Turkey. Moreover, this study is unique as it also looks at constitution-making and youth political participation at the same time.

In terms of methodology, the focus group methodology used in this study is not very different from the previous studies on youth political participation in Turkey. The surveys, another commonly used methodology, are not included in this study. Even though surveys can be used to measure the motivations of young people in deciding their venue of political participation, focus group studies are necessary to explore the structure of their motivations and in-depth definitions. Furthermore, the mixed focus group studies in the previous studies did only aim to discuss on political participation and its problems in general, while the focus groups in this study consist participants only from certain organizations in order to have an in-depth look at the determinants.

At last, the policy contribution of the study is to shed a light for all organizations involving young people in Turkey for new youth policy suggestions. As it gives the opportunity to the young people in different organizations to express themselves in focus group interviews, the findings of the study give hints about young people's expectations from organizations and their suggestions for more involvement in decision-making processes.

1.2 Outline of the Research

The following chapter starts with a section aiming to present different approaches to the concept of *youth*. It is followed by a rich grasp of literature review on youth political participation. It presents the evolution of youth political participation parallel to the evolution of forms of political participation in general. The second part of the chapter consists of the literature review linking political participation with the literature on constitution-making. In the last part, it presents the discussions on youth political participation in Turkey and provides a literature review on youth studies in Turkey.

Chapter 3 provides the information on the methodology of the research. It presents the research question and explains the efficiency of the methodology used in the study. The following section consists of information on the selected institutions.

Chapter 4 is the analysis chapter which analyze the focus group discussions with each group to reveal the findings of the focus group studies that reflect the motivations of young people for venue selection, their perception of politics and young people in other organizations.

At last, Chapter 5 includes a discussion on similarities and differences in young people's motivations and their perceptions; as well as concluding remarks that also address suggestion for further studies.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 What do we mean by “youth”?

The word *youth* refers to a part of society between a certain age range. In other words, it refers to a period of life. In a sense, it is an end of a childhood period and at the same time a transition period towards adulthood. According to its definition, it is a transition between two completely different periods in life cycle:

*The time of life when one is young; especially, the period between childhood and maturity. The early period of existence, growth, or development. Young person, especially, a young male between adolescence and maturity.*³

The youth by definition is differentiated from other parts of society, and idealized by both the generation before and after. For the former, it is a period of freedom; for the latter, it is the period when one is empowered, and has the energy and ambition to change the world.

Rather, youth is a cultural concept that the definition of youth varies from one society to another. Historical evolution of the concept reveals different approaches in different periods. At first stage, it is referred as “*a product of modernization and industrialized societies*” (Burcu, 1998; Lüküslü, 2009; Flanagan and Syvertsen, 2006). Before the Industrial Revolution “*children were perceived as a miniature of adults*” (Lüküslü, 2009: 19); hence the transition stage between childhood and adulthood had not existed (Garell, 1990; Flanagan and Syvertsen, 2006). Although, the Industrial Revolution brought about a new social system where work was in the center that required a ‘preparation phase’ for work life, which was called youth (Xavier in Lüküslü, 2009).

G. Stanley Hall introduced the phase of *adolescence*, when one completes his/her physical development and has sexual development started, as a social construct. In his categorization, adolescence is “*the period of life beyond childhood, but before adoption of adult responsibilities*” (Hall in Simhadri, 1988: 249).

³ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/youth>

The definition in developmental psychology is made by Kenneth Keniston who distinguished youth from adolescence (referred to teenagers at school). He introduced “a separate ‘just emerging’ stage of life called ‘youth’. He proposed to reserve it for students and former students, between the ages 18 and 30” (Adamski, 1988: 193).

Overall, the definitions of youth vary from each other depending on the approaches it is evaluated in. After explaining different approaches, this study will follow the approach of Keniston and include young people aged between 18 and 30.

2.2 Definition

In the literature, scholars differ in their definitions of political participation. One of the most classical definitions is made by Verba and Nie (1975):

Political participation refers to all those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the [s]election of governmental personnel and/or the decisions they make» (Verba and Nie, 1971: 9; Nie and Verba, 1975: 2).

This definition is followed by the categorization of political participation which consists of four modes of political participation: campaigning, voting, communal activities, and personalized contacting (Verba and Nie, 1971: 32-33). This definition limits the political participation within a state centric sphere; however, the political participation does not consist of activities only concerning state, which is also my concern to highlight within the limits of this study. Hence, more comprehensive definitions of political participation are needed such as the one by Uhlaner (1986) in the following paragraph.

As an instrumental phenomenon, the political participation enters the domain of interest because of intended effects upon public policy; as an instrument for achieving policy ends. According to Uhlaner, “*the specific acts... of political participation... will vary from political system to political system. In most western democracies, the relevant acts include among others: voting in elections, giving money to political parties and*

candidates, helping out in a political campaign, contacting elected or appointed officials to express an opinion or to request some action, taking part in a nonpartisan organization's activities directed toward altering some public choice, demonstrating, protesting, and persuading other people to do any of these things" (Uhlener, 1986: 553).

Like in political participation in general, there are different definitions of youth political participation in the literature. The definitions vary from applying values of adult political participation to *"means to be involved, to have tasks and to share and take over responsibility. It means to have access and to be included"* (Lauritzen, 2008; 38).

Currently, the broadest definition of youth political participation is made by the Council of Europe:

Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting and standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engaging in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society (CoE, 2008; 12).

This definition takes the common understanding of youth political participation, which is limited to political involvement or participation in youth councils, to a different stage. It suggests that *"to participate means having influence on and responsibility for decisions and actions that affect the lives of young people or are simply important to them."* (CoE, 2008: 12).

In this way, the practices of youth involvement vary from *"voting in local elections as well as setting up a youth organization or an Internet forum to exchange information about hobbies and interests or other creative ways of spending free time"* (CoE, 2008: 12).

With this definition, the approach to young people and their involvement has changed from *"treating young people as victims, a vulnerable group that needs*

protection and help or as objects of adults' interventions with the adults assuming that they know what is best for young people" to "seeing young people as active players in organisations or in community life" (CoE, 2008: 12).

Young people are now considered as having their own agency with *"lots of potential, talents and strengths" (CoE, 2008: 12).*

In this respect, young people should have be provided the opportunities to express themselves and their needs. In order to find ways to satisfy their needs, they must be involved in processes dealing with problems dealing with their needs and *"they should be supported by others rather than instructed by them" (CoE, 2008: 12)*

2.3 Youth Political Participation in General

The historical classification of empirical research makes it easier to understand the changes in and the range of young people's participation modes. By the early 1960s, political participation mainly meant the involvement in decision making processes within the limits of institutionalized modes of participation, which are elections and political parties. In the following decades, this conventional form of participation was distinct from the unconventional one (Barnes et al., 1979). The unconventional form of participation consists of demonstrations, boycott campaigns, and protests, and it has come to be seen as a 'normal' form of political articulation (Gaiser, 2010). Generally, they address specific issues or problems, hence they are referred to as 'problem specific' or 'issue based'. There is another differentiation of such political activities according to their degree of legality from illegal activities such as unauthorized demonstrations; occupation of properties, wildcat strikes and such. If such actions are non-violent, unlike the activities endorsing damage to property or people, they can also be referred to as 'civil disobedience' (For more details, see also Schneider, 1995, adapted from Uehlinger, 1988).

In democratic systems, people's participation in politics is regarded as a fundamental aspect of the system, both for its legitimacy and its well-functioning. In such systems, youth political participation is as important as general participation. For this reason, political socialization – or political learning – is a crucial point in involving young people in political processes (Odegard, 2007). A research conducted

in Britain among 14-16-year-old students by Debi Roker et al. (1999) shows that youth participation in community services and campaign programmes influences their awareness and understanding of political participation, together with their socio-political thinking. A number of studies also concluded that this sort of political participation of young people generates political competence and strengthens their political orientation (Giles and Eyler, 1994; Yates and Youniss, 1996). This conclusion is also parallel to the findings of a study conducted in the US which concluded that learning programmes and political campaigns can be key sources of political education (Giles and Eyler, 1994; Yates and Youniss, 1996).

Putnam's theory on the decline in traditional forms of political participation (Putnam, 2000) opened a new path. After his theory, academic interest on membership in clubs and associations has increased (Gaiser, 2010). Differentiated analyses over the course of time are considered important because the researchers assumed that 'a society that falls behind an already achieved level of its civic political integration or shows evidence of pronounced regional or social differences in citizens' political participation must be interpreted as warning signs for a democracy' (Weßels, 2004: 639).

Almost from all western countries, researchers, politicians and professionals emphasize the decreasing interest in politics, participation, lower voter turnout and violence against the state by marginalized groups. By looking at the scientific findings on the youth political culture, we can say that the democratic systems have troubles with young generations. (See Putnam, 2000; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Youniss et al., 2002).

With this emphasis, topics like participation, political attitudes and citizenship have taken attention of the academics during the last decade of the twenty-first century (see Forbrig et al. 2005; Torney-Purta et al., 1999; Wallace et al., 2005), and hence much research has been conducted for last two decades in western countries. The findings come out to be that public institutions, together with family, the media and politics itself, are able to provide knowledge and critical interpretations of political processes. These channels can also provide chances for participation to enable the youth to develop civic awareness for their citizenship (Brady et al., 1995; Sherrod, 2003).

While these agencies of socialization are widely explored, the influence of youth culture has not taken much attention (Youniss et al., 2002: 270). By now, only limited research has been conducted to study the political culture of young people in selected youth cultures. Hence, there is a significant lack of empirical research on the youth cultural styles for political learning and socialization (Pfaff, 2009).

Recent studies on youth and politics consist of two lines: studies on the political culture of the young, and research on the process of political socialization and the question of how political attitudes and forms of participation develop. The first focuses on the traditional political attitudes towards state, the idea of political parties and democracy, or traditional forms of political participation, such as party membership and voting (see, Hurrelman and Albert, 2002; 2006 for Germany; Putnam, 2000 for the US, Helve and Wallace, 2001; Goerres, 2007 for Europe). The findings of this research tradition looking at youth political culture have been considered as political disaffection and disenchantment with politics, and eventually this reflected the need for more empirical research on political socialization (Pfaff, 2009).

The second tradition looks at the process of political socialization with a micro level approach as ‘the patterns and processes by which individuals engage in political development and learning, constructing their particular relationships to the political contexts in which they live’ (Sapiro, 2004:3). Different studies focused on the influences of certain agencies of political socialization (see Setterston and Owens, 2002), like family (Bock, 2000; Hopf and Hopf, 1997), or media (Horowitz, 2005) or specific points like racism (see Heitmeyer and Müller, 1995; Möller, 2000). These studies documented the diverse influences on the process of political socialization for the fields of life like family, media, school, together with socio-economic conditions (Sapiro, 2004; Sherrod et al., 2002; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Together with these, the peer group (Pfaff and Krüger, 2006), non-governmental organizations (Glanville, 1999; Warleigh, 2001), and music styles (Dolfsma, 1999; Fung, 1994; Jackson, 2002) were also taken into consideration in recent studies.

When we look at what has been done on the forms of organizations, we see two different groups: traditional organizations/associations/clubs; and informal groups and activities considered as situation related or temporary. The first form of organizations

is large traditional organizations in the institutionalized political participation. These organizations are regarded as structured organizations where interests and functioning are clarified, and they consider themselves as membership organizations. In this sort of organizations, participation, which comes with membership, has a longer lasting nature, and loyalties or relationships are relatively strong. The most common example of them is the political parties that are eventually key organizations in politics. Another form of these traditional organizations consists of large organizations which bring people with certain interests together. The examples of this kind are labour unions, welfare, trade or professional associations.

The second form of organization consists of informal groups and organizations such as citizens' initiatives, environmentalist, activist or self-help groups. Their involvement dates back to the 1970s and 1980s out of parliaments, where the traditional form of organizations actively generates in political arena. They are mostly linked to everyday fields of action and political or public objectives, and are included under the term 'New Social Movement' (NSM). Compared to the others, these organizations have less strict form of organization and are less traditional. Even though they have evolved to become more established and financially powerful throughout decades, such as Greenpeace, they are still considered different from the traditional ones today. These less traditional organizations' appearance in the political arena has broadened the term 'political activity' and now they are an integral part of the politics today (Pfaff, 2009).

2.3 Forms of Youth Political Participation

There are different forms of youth political participation where young people are involved in decision making processes. These consist of political party membership, voluntary work in NGOs or clubs, voting, participation in youth councils or campaigns (CoE, 2008).

These are categorized under three main forms of participation by Chisholm and Kovacheva (2002) as *institutional politics*, *protest politics* and *civic engagement*. Institutional politics refers to membership to political parties or interest groups and participation in elections and campaigns, while protest politics refers to participating

demonstrations and social movements. The last category of civic engagement consists of voluntary work, community participation and associative life.

Until late 1990s, the literature had presented the depolitization and apathy among young people and portrayed this as belonging to the 1980 generation. But, the studies in late 1990s suggest that young people are not disengaged from politics or societies as they are seen by the media or adults (Kim & Sherman, 2006).

The point previous studies had missed was that young people had not been involved in politics through traditional ways; instead they were involved in politics through contemporary forms (Kim & Sherman, 2006; Lüküslü, 2009; MacKinnon et al., 2007).

This shift in the form of political participation means that young citizens are not mobilized in relation to state, but in relation to causes or issues (Bang, 2005). Moreover, 'micro-territories of the local' are the new areas where young people's political thoughts and actions are shaped. They include family, home, peer groups, school, and neighbourhood; but the traditional institutions of the state (Harris and Wyn, 2009). Some scholars indicate that these new spaces created by and/or for young people are the outcome of their use of information and communication technologies, especially the internet (for example Bennett, 2007; Collin, 2008; Olsson, 2008; Vromen, 2008). In short, young people started to join non-traditional institutions in the 1990s as they perceived traditional institutions incapable of meeting their demands (Chisholm & Kovacheva, 2002).

Despite all these changes, youth political participation is still primarily considered as the course of activities connecting young people with the state. Their political activities are understood as either 'consenting to state domination' through participation in voting, political parties and formal participation mechanisms or 'struggling against state domination' through social movements and grassroots activism (Bang, 2005: 169). However, theories of 'network governance' (Considine, 2005; Rhodes, 1997) and 'culture governance' (Bang, 2004a) argue that policy networks have changed, expanding from functional networks in government agencies to include other actors from non-government sectors, including business and community organizations (Rhodes, 1997: 45). Because of this change in the policy process, scholars suggest that governments, leaders and managers need to involve

more and more people, organizations and communities in policy production and implementation (Bang, 2004a: 159). Networks are therefore thought to be energizing old traditions of public policy production and stimulating a new focus on forms of public participation (Considine, 2005).

'Everyday makers' are other actors of political arena. They are willing to be politically active, but the variety of their political activities is bigger, ranging from state to corporate to community figures. They are cause-oriented, but not a part of collective action. Rather than that, they prefer individualized political action. They also express their political attitudes through their life styles. For example, they boycott products harmful to environment and change their shopping habits accordingly (Wallace, 2006; Kovacheva, 2005). According to them, there is a potential for political action in everyday activities, such as writing for a local magazine to running an arts festival with a group of friends. They aim to influence small change through daily interactions, but shift grand narratives (Pfaff, 2009). These political actors practice their participation not in traditional and professionalized areas, where expert citizens are networked into governance structures. However, they are willing to 'do it' with the system — work in partnership with private, public and voluntary organizations — to achieve their goals (Bang, 2004b: 26). They may write blogs on government aid, sit on the local organizing committee for the Reclaim the Night March or contribute to a community fashion parade by Indigenous young people (Vromen, 2010).

Having different forms of political participation explained, in the following subsections, particularly political parties and civic engagement will be presented.

2.3.1 Political parties

The recent literature shows that in most liberal democracies, political party membership has declined in last decades. (Dalton & Wattenberg 2000; Mair & van Biezen 2001). Statistics show that 13 per cent of the electorate paid their dues as political party members in the 1960s, this number declined to 9 per cent in the 1980s and at last in the 1990s, 6 per cent of the electorate called themselves members of a political party (Putnam 2002: 406).

This decline could be taken as an evidence for political parties losing support, and they could be replaced by new types of organizations (Dalton & Wattenberg 2000; Scarrow 2000). The well-known concept of cartel parties, which rely on volunteer support less than traditional parties, is getting dominated (Katz & Mair 1994, 1995). These parties use the mass media and their election campaigns are run by professionals, which makes the members of the party less effective.

In this respect, youth branches of political parties are interesting to look at, since they function as recruitment body for the political parties. Regarding this decline, Dalton (2000: 31) suggests: “*the decrease of partisanship in advanced industrial democracies has been disproportionately concentrated among the young.*”

Regarding the fact that people gain participatory habits in early ages, this downward trend may have long-term affects (Jennings 1987; Fendrich & Turner 1989; Hooghe & Stolle 2003). Despite their importance, the studies on youth organizations of political parties remain limited in political science literature.

According to Hooghe and Stolle (2003), the study on youth organizations is also relevant to political socialisation research: “it can be expected that youth organisations function as socialising agents for partisanship and organisational learning processes. Not only do they introduce young members to the ideology of the party, they also function as a kind of learning school, where the members gradually grow acquainted with political and party life.”

In such process, their crucial insight consists of age. Even though all new members eventually affect and shape the *group culture* in the organization they join, the experience of socialisation is stronger among young people. From this point of view, the experiences of socialisation in early ages have longer lasting effect on future attitudes (Jennings & Niemi 1981; Fendrich & Turner 1989; Hooghe & Stolle 2003; Sears & Levy 2003).

At last, Hooghe and Stolle (2003) propose two different causal mechanisms in order to explain long-lasting impact of youth participation on adult political activism. The first one, the attitudinal mechanism, proposes that socialisation experiences have stronger and deeper effect on the beliefs and attitudes at early ages. The second mechanism, the network mechanism, suggests that establishing networks is easier at early age and more likely to last effective and accessible later in life cycle. For this

reason, young people who establish their own networks in political life will be more likely to be a part of further political mobilisation later in life.

2.3.2 Civic Engagement

The rising interest in youth studies has brought about significant number of new research on young people's civic engagement. Youth political participation has not only attracted the academics. In addition to academic research, there has also been considerable number of reports published for policy makers as well. Despite the different methodologies used looking at different aspects of youth civic engagement, all the research and reports emphasize the importance of civic engagement on 'being a good citizen' and the impact of it on youth's political activities (Sherrod, 2006; Wright, 1999; MacKinnon et al., 2007).

The concept *civic engagement* refers to '*the activities undertaken by individuals in the interest of public good. These actions may be based in volunteering, activism, institutional politics or cultural acts*' (Burns et al, 2008: 55). On one hand, the definition also includes traditional forms of political participation such as political party membership and voting. On the other hand, Chisholm and Kovacheva (2002) distinguish political party membership from membership in NGOs, civil society organizations and voluntary organizations. In this study, I will also follow the same perspective, and look at the youth political participation in NGOs as civic engagement.

Starting from the 1990s, young people started getting mobilised by issues concerning themselves with the goal to influence and engage in decision-making processes, especially for those concerning youth-related issues. This is called *youth-led movement* by Braxton (2006: 3001), and defined as "*a movement dedicated to issues that directly concern youth also led by youth*". Their activities include establishing youth-run organizations, which are also known as *youth NGOs* today, and establishing platforms in order to get involved in decision-making processes such as European Youth Forum in Europe or National Youth Assembly in Turkey.

These organizations focus on 'youth policies' or 'youth work' which consist of activities solely focusing on youth or youth-related issues (Nemutlu, 2008). Their primary goal is the inclusion of young people in society by enhancing their potential to

enable them to have a say in their own future. Lauritzen (2008), defines youth work as follows:

Youth work is a summary expression for activities with and for young people of social, cultural, educational or political nature [...] It belongs to the domain of 'out-of-school' education..."

According to this definition, youth work's focus varies from education, employment, mobility, and housing to more traditional areas of political participation and leisure. In addition to these, they also deal with young people from disadvantaged groups or young immigrants.

Regardless from their age, people who work in the field of youth work are called *youth worker*, while those make a living by involving in youth work are called *professional youth worker* (Nemutlu, 2008).

Youth work and youth NGOs provide platforms for young people to express themselves and involve in decision-making processes concerning issues related to them. In this respect, they are invaluable for young people's political participation, both in civic and political life.

They generally function by voluntary involvement of young people, and their commitment to their shared values and advocacy of their own interests. In these organizations, young people are able to experience an informal community as well as a formal structure which provides a good learning experience of democracy for them. They as well gain experience in decision-making processes, negotiation skills and the use of democratic instruments (Becky, Dreber, Freitag & Hanisch, 2004; 63).

2.4 Constitution-making and Conflict Resolution

In this section, I will look at the constitution making as a negotiation process between different interest groups in society. And from that point, I will try to explain the relationship between constitution making and political participation.

The constitutions at first draw the lines of political actions and also affect the preferences of actors in political life. As political *artifacts*, their content and effects on political practices mirror the political actors' preferences, either shared or conflictive (Negretto, 1998).

One of the definitions of constitution making is:

A temporarily limited process in which a group of political actors engage in the drafting, discussion and approval of a written document that intends to regulate the machinery of government, the relation between individuals and public authorities, states of exception and amendment procedures (Negretto, 1998: 3).

According to this definition, the activities in which the political actors are involved in and the limits of such actions are regulated by constitutions, which will be the aspects I will be looking at in this study.

When we look at the literature regarding constitution-making, the subject has been vastly studied by historians and lawyers. Another extensive part of the literature looks at how efficient different arrangements in constitutions are which is also called constitutional design. In addition to these, political theorists have paid much attention to constitution-making referring the effect of the process on founding principles of a political regime⁴.

However, there is a lack of research in the literature that solely look at the constitution-making process itself in explaining the foundations of major political institutions⁵. At this point, Gabriel Negretto (1998) suggests looking at two important elements: *the structure of collective interaction which lies behind the various episodes of constitution-making* and *general mechanisms shaping the behaviour and choices of the framers*.

⁴ On constitution-making and the foundation of political regimes, two recent important works are *We The People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991) and *The Future of the Liberal Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) by Bruce Ackerman. On a similar line of analysis, an excellent overview of historical types of constitution-making is provided by Andrew Arato, in "Forms of Constitution-Making and Theories of Democracy", *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2, December 1995, pp. 191-231.

⁵ A unique study focusing on constitution-making process in itself belongs to Andrea Bonime-Blanc (1987), in *Spain's Transition to Democracy: the Politics of Constitution-Making* (New York: Westview Press). She focuses on the importance of constitution-making process to understand a successful transition to democracy.

According to the author, in constitution-making processes, there are three characteristics. First, in the initiation phase, there are actors aiming to create the new rules and regulations on the distribution and exercise of political power in the community. This requires the actors' ability to come up with common ground rules for negotiation and to eliminate existing conflicts. Considering the fact that actors may have opposing positions and interests, it is often difficult to have an efficient environment in which the actors can solely focus on resolving conflicts.

The second phase happens in the environment where different groups with different and conflictive views aim to frame how their values and interests will be treated by institutions. This process is when the parties have the conflictive and/or opposing choices on multiple issues in constitution-making process. Only then, the actors are willing to seize the opportunity of mutual concessions and exchanges (Raiffa, 1982: 131-132).⁶ . In such a case, actors can give concessions on some issues in order to gain the support of other parties in negotiation for another issue which is more crucial for them.

At last, all these different and divided groups should come up with a consensus on the constitution. The fair distribution of power and resources among the actors is important. The asymmetrical distribution of resources, both political and institutional, makes it difficult to resolve the conflicts among different groups. This may also lead the oppression of the powerful actor where the likeliness of compromise and consensus is abandoned (Negretto, 1998: 5).

In this process "bargaining problem" is likely to occur when all actors aim to reach an agreement. This problem is "*a situation in which the parties have a common interest in arriving at some agreement but a conflict of interest over which agreement that is to be* (Elster, 1989:50). The outline of the processes above is helpful to understand different stages of constitution making which either contribute or impede to actors' ability and willingness to reach a consensus.

2.4.1 Constitution Making in Turkey

The constitution drafted under military rule after 1980 coup is still in use in Turkey. It doesn't only limit the rights and freedoms of the citizens, but it also symbolizes the hindrance to further democratization in the country. And today, the task of writing a new constitution through social consensus of the non-military actors is one of the most urgent issues. In *Democratization and the Politics of Constitution-Making in Turkey*, Özbudun and Gençkaya bring the literature of constitution-making and democratic consolidation and offer an extensive review on these two in Turkey.

Until today, there had been five constitutions (1876, 1921, 1924, 1961 and 1982) in Turkey, all of which were drafted and written under either single party regime or military rule. Neither the constitutional amendments, some of which consist of important changes, were evaluated by public upon a consensus. In all cases, the constitutions and amendments were imposed by political elites either from military or with a background from military. The most recent changes were done under EU accession process, also called democratization packages. But again, even none of them has consisted of public consultancy, rather an external pressure (Özbudun and Gençkaya, 2009).

Despite the lack of public consensus, the amendments and democratization packages in the EU accession process have contributed to the democratization process of Turkey. In other words, they have been beneficial in terms of improving the status of individual rights and freedoms in Turkey.

Despite the fact that the amendments adopted in the last decades have been beneficial for further democratization, more changes for a fully functioning democratic system are required. Without the external pressure of EU accession process, they would not have been possible to make. Even they had the support of few opposition parties, which made them more inclusive than the elite-made constitutions; there has still been a lack of social consensus and participation of all groups in society. The only chance for a significant change or a new constitution requires the adaptation of consensual constitution-making processes.

According to Özbudun and Gençkaya, the current 1982 constitution, drafted by military rule, is an obstacle before Turkey's democratization as it prolongs the

(Kemalist) bureaucratic authoritarianism. That's why; a new constitution made by civilian political actors will bring about a democratic consolidation by abolishing authoritarian spirit (Özbudun and Gençkaya, 2009).

The new constitution-making process is a new task that requires bypassing elites willing to maintain the status quo and including all different groups in society. It is the only way to make the first civilian-made constitution of Turkey inclusive and consolidate further democracy in the country.

2.5 Youth Political Participation in Turkey

The discussions on political participation in Turkey stress the low level of participation and lack of interest of people to be involved in politics. Reasons for this limited political participation and socialization are referred to be the constitutional regulations, and laws on political parties and election system (Boyraz, 2009: 132).

The constitutional arrangements, which limit the scope of political participation, also keep the youth political participation low. In order to understand the low level of political participation, we should first look at the structural obstacles before fundamental political freedoms in the country, such as freedom of speech and expression, freedom of propaganda, and freedom of organization. Especially after the military intervention in 1980, the 1982 constitution has established very restrictive limits on political participation and socialization processes, as well as organizations such as political parties, associations and unions. Political movements and political participation were on the rise between 1960 and 1980, after the one-party rule and before the military rule in post-1980 coup years, when young people in universities were especially highly politicized. These developments were considered as the impact of instability of politics and polarization in society, hence the military rule after 1980 strictly banned political activities and organizations. During the military rule, the free market economy, framed by the decisions of government on 24 January 1980⁷, was introduced and integrated to the oppressive political life. The red lines, restricting

⁷ 24 Ocak Kararları (24 January Decisions) refer to the economic programme of Turkey which was announced to the public on 24 January 1980. This programme is accepted to represent the transition to free market economy.

political sphere for participation, brought out the question of who the main actors in politics will be in resolving social issues. In this sense, there has not been a rearrangement to enhance the political participation and at the end, the only channel for political participation and being partnership in decision making has come to be only voting in elections.

As the structural limits only allowed political activities within political parties, they have become the only venue to find a solution for social and political problems. In the post-coup era, with the rise of new-right political movements and neo-liberal economic policies, the need to overcome the dissatisfaction from socio-economic inequality was dealt with patronage relations (Boyraz, 2009: 133).

The roots of these patronage relations revert to the beginning of multiparty system in Turkey. The beginning of political participation is accepted as the multiparty system mobilized the countryside in 1950 (Sayarı, 1975: 126). Even though the votes were received through patronage connections, the citizens became electorate by the act of voting (Sayarı, 1975: 126). The main trigger effect which caused a significant increase in political participation in Turkey was the socioeconomic change (Özbudun, 1975: 43).

As a result, the political parties and the space for their activities were limited by the authoritarian constitution drafted under military rule in 1982. Within these limits, the political socialisation and mobilisation of the public had become almost impossible. The bans on any kind of political organization had prevented masses to carry out political activities. Hence, the only political interaction between the political elite and public had become voting. In addition to these limits to political participation in general, the abolishment of the youth branches of political parties and other form of organizations had aimed to keep young people from any kind of political activity and its effect have pursued until today. At the end, the core of the problem has evolved as the absence of structural participation mechanisms from bottom to the top.

2.5.1 Studies on Youth Political Participation in Turkey

The studies on youth political participation in Turkey point out that the military coup in 1980 has caused a structural transition, which had absolute control on all kinds of political activities, in the channels of young people's political involvement⁸.

The negative effects of the elimination of youth organizations under the military rule still exist today. In this sense, there is no difference between young people and adults when it comes to depolitization and political alienation⁹. It is not surprising to see the reflections of rising nationalism and conservatism in society among young people¹⁰. Both the limits of political and public spheres determined by the military rule and national educational system have helped to impose these values on young people and create the *reasonable citizens* (Üstel, 2004). The young people were continuously advised by their families to focus on their education and career, and stay away from any form of political activities. Instead of the values like freedom, solidarity, and social responsibility; individual well-being and satisfaction have evolved as the main interest of young people¹¹.

According to a study conducted in Istanbul, which looks at young people's interest on politics in particular reflects that young people are unwilling to be involved in politics (Yurdsever-Ateş, 2006). In the sample of this study, the proportion of young people who are active political participants are only 21 per cent, and only 7,9 per cent of them are active members of political parties. When compared to the whole sample,

⁸ Such studies are Lüküslü, Demet, 2005, *La Juenesse Turque Actuelle: La Fin du "Mythe" de la Jeunese*; Armağan, İbrahim, 2004, *Gençlik Gözüyle Gençlik, 21. Yüzyıl Eşiğinde Türkiye Gençliği*, Kısıklılar Vakfı, USADEM Yayınları, İstanbul, and Kentel, Ferhat, 1995, *Türkiye'de 90'ların Gençliği İMV-SAM*, Yeni Yüzyıl Kitaplığı, İstanbul.

⁹ For more studies on thi subject see also Y. Esmir Evrim, Devrim, Statüko: Türkiye'de Sosyal, Siyasal, Ekonomik Değerler, TESEV, İstanbul, 1999; Biz kimiz Araştırmaları (Who We Are?) by TESEV and KONDA. (In 2006 for newspaper Milliyet, in 2008 for newspaper Hürriyet)

¹⁰ A comprehensive study on this subject is a reasearch on *Social Values* conducted with 2200 university students by TESEV, see Erdem-Artan, İnci, 2005, *Üniversite Gençliği Değerler Araştırması*, TESEV, İstanbul.

¹¹ For other comprehensive studies on university students in Turkey see also Yazıcı, Erdiñç, 2003, *Üniversite Gençliğinin Sosyo Kültürel Profili Üzerine Bir Alan Araştırması*, Gazi Üniversitesi Yayınları, Ankara and Bayhan, Vehbi, 2002, *Genç Kimliği: Üniversite Gençliğinin Sosyolojik Profili*, İnönü Üniversitesi, Malatya.

only 1, 7 per cent of these young people in Istanbul participate in political parties' activities. The level of participation among these young people increases as they are less educated and have better socio-economic status. In other words, when the status they gain with their degree is insufficient to achieve their goals, they attempt to attain them with their economic power and power they obtain with political party membership (Caymaz, 2008: 300).

In the same study, 80 per cent of participants think that young people are not sufficiently represented in politics. Despite this, their political participation remains poor. Yurdsever-Ateş links this attitude with the military coup. The young generations are unhappy with the structural problems caused by the military regime, but at the same there is an absence of channels to express themselves (Yurdsever-Ateş, 2006: 146). This lack of ability of young people to express them is also related to the ban on political organizations after military coup for almost two decades. Even though the youth branches of political parties are allowed today, the remnants of the ban still exist. This is usually linked to the political culture influenced by the military rule which discourages young people from any kind of political activity. In the following decades after the military rule, young people have always been advised to *stay away from politics* by families. Young people have always been exposed to the stories of bedevilling experiences of previous generations due to the political activism.

In addition to the strict limitations of the military rule and political culture young generations had been raised in, the new liberal policies introduced under the military rule have not only changed economic relations, but also caused a transition in cultural and political life. This transition period deeply affected young generations, and a new "youth" was created with the influence of free market economy, consumption society, and rapidly increasing private TV channels (Caymaz, 2008: 300).

In the post-military coup era, the young people were strictly advised to stay away from political activities and secure themselves instead of involving in political activities to *secure the state*. The oppressive regulations of the military rule on political parties, unions and associations deeply damaged the youth movements as well. Even though there was a democratic transition after few years of military rule, the youth associations and political party's youth branches had been shut down for seventeen years. The strategy of the military rule to keep young people under control

has been carried on by the civil governments in the following years. When the youth branches of the political parties were allowed to become active again in 1997, young people could get back to politics, but as individuals who had accepted hierarchal relations within the party. They started following the tasks given by the adults in the party and used the youth branches to have a future career in higher positions and titles within the party (Caymaz, 2008: 301).

Under the military rule, rules and regulations restricted the ability to form any kind of organization and as mentioned above, the political parties' youth branches had been banned for seventeen years. Hence, as other forms of organizations had also been strictly limited, it is not difficult to link young people's lack of interest in politics after they were prevented to be involved in any kind of political activity for almost two decades. In addition to the rules and regulations, the black propaganda of the military rule on politization influenced the families to raise *apolitical* young people.¹²

The policies on youth have been limited to official rhetoric and decreasing the age to be elected 25¹³. The universities, which had been one of the most politicized arenas for young people between 1960 and 1980¹⁴, have become financially concerned institutions responsible to train qualified young people for the free market (Boyraz, 2009: 135). Young people have not been considered as a part of these production relations. Instead, they were considered as an idealized segment of society who had an overwhelming mission of creating bright futures (Boyraz, 2009: 136). With this mission, they were expected to come up with objective approach and solutions to the problems (Benlisoy, 2003).

¹² To compare the level of youth political participation before and after the military rule, see also Karadeniz, Harun, 1975, *Olaylı Yıllar ve Gençlik*, May Yayınları, İstanbul and Ozankaya, Özer, 1966, *Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Siyasal Yönelimleri*, SBF Yayınları, 127, Ankara.

¹³ The age to be elected in European countries varies between 18 and 25. For example, it is 18 in Germany to be elected for Bundestag and in Sweden for Riksdag. In Belgium, it is 18 to be elected for local administration, in England it is 25 to be elected for House of Common, in France it is 23 and in Italy it is 25 to be elected for parliament.

¹⁴ See also Tatlıcan, Semih, 1995, *1980 Sonrası Öğrenci Dernekleri*, Birikim, 73: 72-78 and Bora, Tanıl, 1989, *Öğrenci Hareketinin Sorunları Üzerine*, Birikim, Kasım, 47-60.

2.5.2 Studies on Youth in Turkey

The studies on youth political participation have been on rise since the 1990s. There has been a consistence among the findings of the studies on young people's values and their political participation conducted in different periods of time.

A study conducted in 1999 by Strategy MORI and IRI (International Republican Institute), and replicated by ARI Movement and Strategy GfK in 2003, focuses on the changes in the channels for and the level of youth political participation in Turkey¹⁵. The findings of this study reveal that the most common practice in youth political participation is *voting*, as the membership in political parties and joining their activities remains at less than 10 per cent. The findings of these studies show that between 1999 and 2003 the political parties as a venue for youth political participation were the least demanded and the level of youth political participation remained the same (Erdoğan, 2003).

Another study, *Research on the Political Attitudes of Turkish Youth* was conducted in 2008 as a continuation of those in 1999 and 2003, again by ARI Movement, representing young people aged between 15 and 27 with 804 participants. This study shows a loss of trust in institutions like political parties' youth branches between 1999 and 2008. According to all these three studies (conducted in 1999, 2003 and 2008), the proportion of young people's interest in politics was 45 per cent in 1999, 34 per cent in 2003 and 40 per cent in 2008. At the same time, the pattern for young people's behaviour in conventional political participation, such as voting, being a member of a political party and actively working in political parties' publicity activities, did not change significantly between 1999 and 2008¹⁶. When we look at the proportion of voting in elections, young people aged between 18 and 25 had the same attitude in these studies. This situation can be understood as a reflection of lack of trust towards political parties in Turkey as the lack of interest in political participation through political parties¹⁷. Also, 70 per cent of young people did not consider the

¹⁵ See also Genç Net (ARI Hareketi), 2002, *Türk Gençliği ve Katılım: Katıl ve Geleceğini Yarat I. İstanbul*.

¹⁶ The same applies to the members of NGOs participated in the study.

¹⁷ In a study on Istanbul Youth, the trust towards political parties were found to be 2.39 per cent. See also Zeylan, Umut S. (der.), 2007, *Eğitimin Değeri ve Gençlik: Eğitimli*

membership of an NGO as a political activity¹⁸. The findings of United Nations' report¹⁹ on Turkish Youth has the same results, in which young people utter that politics is not *honest and just* and people cannot get what they deserve in political arena²⁰.

Erdoğan (2003), in his study representing people in Turkey aged above 18, indicates that 11 per cent of the voters are members of a political party, 12 per cent of them join party meetings, 7 per cent attend in home meetings of political parties and 9 per cent try to influence someone else in any kind of political participation. When it comes to activities within political parties, only 3 per cent of the voters are part of activities of political parties such as door-to-door publicity, hanging on banners or giving out flyers. With focus on youth, studies conducted by TÜSES in different years²¹ and TÜSİAD in 2001²² have findings that are parallel to those looking at the whole population.

Research on young people's interest in politics and their participation was held by Ferhat Kentel in 1998 (Kentel, 2005). The results of this research are also parallel to those mentioned above. For example, while only 3,7 per cent of young people were members of a political party, only 3 per cent of them were members of other social, political and cultural associations and only 10 per cent of young people had the subject of politics in their conversations with each other. According to another study

İstanbul Gençliğinin Değerler Dünyası, İstanbul Bilgi niversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, s. 130.

¹⁸ In 1999, the proportion was 74 per cent.

¹⁹ UNDP *Türkiye de Gençlik Ulusal İnsani Gelişme Raporu*, 2008, undp.org.tr/publicationsDocuments/NHDR_Tr.pdf

²⁰ For lack of trust towards political parties' youth branches see also Esmer, Yılmaz (1999), Adaman, Fikret, Çarkoğlu, Ali and Şenatalar, Burhan, *Hanehalkı Üzerinden Türkiye'de Yolsuzluğun Nedenleri ve Önlenmesine İlişkin Öneriler*; TESEV, İstanbul, 2001 and Eurobarometer results

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb68/eb68_en.htm.

²¹ Since 1994, TÜSES with Veri Araştırma publishes reports *Türkiye'de Siyasi Parti Yandaş ve Seçmenlerinin Nitelikli ve Siyasal Yönelişleri* periodically. See 1994-1995: *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partilerin Seçmenleri ve Sosyal Demokrasinin Toplumsal Tabanı* (May, 1995), 1996: *Türkiye'de Siyasi Parti Seçmenlerinin Nitelikleri, Kimlikleri ve Eğilimleri ve Sosyal Demokrasinin Tabanı* (September, 1996), 1998: *Türkiye'de Siyasi Parti Seçmenleri ve Toplum Düzeni* (February, 1999) and 2002: *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partilerin Yandaş ve Seçmen Profili* (November, 2002).

²² See also <http://www.tusiad.org/turkish/rapor/secim1/8.pdf>

conducted by Gazi University (Ozankaya, 1966) shows that only 1, 4 per cent of young people spend their leisure time in political parties and other associations²³.

According to research on *Istanbul Youth, Youth Values*, conducted in 2004 with participants aged between 18 and 25, 68 per cent of young people said they never talk about politics with their peers (Kazgan, 2006). In the same research, 81, 5 per cent of interviewed participants were not a member of political parties or other organizations. In Nevin Yurdsever-Ateş's study on Istanbul Youth (2006), only 1, 7 per cent of the participants actively participate in the activities of a political party. In addition to this, the proportion membership in NGOs, as institutions with higher level of ability for members in decision making processes, was more than political parties', but still very low (Yurdsever-Ateş, 2006). The findings of *Istanbul Youth – Does Education Make a Difference?* (Yentürk, 200(8): 331). with 1014 young participants, show that more than 50 per cent of young people were not interested in politics at all, 75 per cent were not members of any clubs or associations, and lastly only 1,2 per cent of them were members of political parties.

Yentürk et al. (2008), analyzes the data of *Istanbul Youth – Does Education Make a Difference?*²⁴, which were collected with face-to-face interviews with 1014 young people aged between 15-24, in comparison between young people in NGOs and the others. This unique study focuses solely on young people who are politically active through NGOs in Turkey. In this study, 11,7 per cent of young people are members of sports associations, 13,8 per cent are members of clubs or associations, while 74,5 per cent of them are not member of any club or association (Yentürk, 2008: 331). With this analysis, the authors aimed to evaluate the factors which distinguish young people in NGOs from those who are not. They also emphasize the fact that the level of participation of young people through NGOs in Turkey still remains very low.

²³ The findings of Ozankaya's study (1966) shows that the proportion of male members of political parties was 6,3 per cent, while female members' proportion was 1,8 per cent. See Ozankaya, Özer, 1966, *Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Siyasal Yönelimleri*, SBF Yayınları, 127, Ankara.

²⁴For the results of the research see Zeylan, Umut S. (der.), 2007, *Eğitimin Değeri ve Gençlik: Eğitimli İstanbul Gençliğinin Değerler Dünyası*, İstanbul Bilgi niversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul.

Different from the findings about political parties, young people who are not members of NGOs expressed that they would consider membership in an NGO in the future. The lowest difference of the proportion in terms of clubs or associations, which young people are either already members or willing to be members, is in student clubs or associations. This finding reflects that young people feel more comfortable in organizations formed with their peers where they can easily be part of the decision making processes (Yentürk, 2008: 333).

Young people's interest in having a certain *status* is an interesting finding of the same study. This outcome is usually expected from the studies on young people's involvement in political parties, as they seek a future career in politics. But in this case, young people in NGOs seek the social status that they cannot have as a young individual in society through their work in an NGO (Yentürk, 2008: 335). NGO members spend more money on their clothes than on books/magazines, and their social status is about their appearance as well as their socio-cultural consumption (Yentürk, 2008: 335). In addition, young people who are not members of NGOs are more interested in individual and self-centred values compared to those in political parties.

Yentürk et al. (2008), points out that young people in NGOs are more productive and active participants compared to those in political parties. Even though there is not a vast difference, they work with computer more than those who are not members of an NGO, are more interested in scientific and technological developments, and at last they are more interested in fine arts, as they play music instruments, join drama clubs and write poems/novels (Yentürk, 2008: 336).

At last, even though young people who are members of clubs and associations are not highly interested in politics, their interest ranks more than those who are not part of such organizations. For example, while 49 per cent of young people in NGOs did not know whom to vote for, this number among non-members is 54 per cent. But, looking at the findings of the study in terms of young people's values (such as social responsibility and sensitivity to the social issues), young people in NGOs are more politic, but again their perception of *politics* remains limited to only party politics (Yentürk, 2008: 342).

Overall, there still remains a lack of empirical research on youth political participation both in other countries and in Turkey. There is also a space for research to explore young people's motivations in the political participation, as well as their proposals to enable them to participate more in decision-making processes.

Until today, the studies on youth political participation both in Turkey and other countries have focused on different forms of political participation and different activities young people engage in those organizations. They also focused on the decline in traditional forms of political participation and the role of emerging organizations.

From my point of view, within the context of Turkey, it is important to look at what makes these institutions different from each other that young people choose different venues for political participation in Turkey. Considering the evolution of institutionalization of political participation and organizations, I believe that young people have different motivations to decide on their venue for political participation.

In this respect, in my study, I aim to look at youth political participation from a very specific perspective. The focus group studies aim to explore the motivations of young people to be involved in politics through either political parties or NGOs.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will explain the research question, sub-questions, and methodology that I have used in this study. Moreover, I will contextualize my case selection and present the technique I have used in analysing the data.

The methodology used in this study is qualitative one which is the focus group study. Focus group studies were conducted with young people both from the youth branches of political parties and NGOs, and data collected by focus group interviews were analysed by content-analysis.

3.1 Research Question

The main research question of this study is as follows: *“What are the motivations of young people in Turkey in deciding their venue for political participation?”*

Following the aim and the research question of this study, there are other sub questions that can be asked. These could be *“What are the impacts of young people’s stories on political involvement on their venue selection?”*, *“What are their opinions about the institutions they are involved in?”*, *“To what extent their activities vary from those in the other form of institution?”* and *“What are their opinions and activities concerning the constitution-writing process in Turkey?”*

3.2 Focus Group Research Design

In this research, I use the qualitative research design which enables the researcher to observe the world from the perspective of people studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This opportunity to analyze things in their natural settings allows the researcher better explain the meanings brought to the phenomena studies.

The determinants for the research technique for this study are based on the research question, which aims to explore the motives of young people for politically involving in different kind of institutions in Turkey, rather than testing a hypothesis. With this exploratory aim, this research analyzes the stories of young people, their

experiences and perceptions which are dependent on and shaped by their own environment.

Compared to the quantitative research design, which consists of numbers, and impartiality; the qualitative research design has the advantage of investigating social processes, phenomena and cases in their social contexts in depth (Neuman, 2006). In this respect:

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials- case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional and visual text- that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; 3)

As defined above, qualitative research design's basic materials are based on empirical data. Even though there could be a hypothesis in qualitative research design, the researcher does not necessarily need numbers to test the hypothesis. In my study, I will benefit from the empirical data collected by focus group interviews.

Focus group is a qualitative research technique "*that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher*" (Morgan, 1996: 130). In this research technique the researcher may also take the role of a moderator, which eventually makes the discussions and more importantly the interaction between the participants are the primary source of data. In this respect, the unit of analysis is not the individuals but the group of participants. The researcher as a moderator plays an active role during the discussions. Lastly, the aim of this methodology is to collect data which distinguishes it from other group discussions that have different purposes other than academic research.

Such characteristics of focus group methodology also bring about strengths and weaknesses in comparison with other data collection techniques consisting of participant observation and in-depth interviews. At first, focus group interviews focus on the issues in researcher's interest. The focus groups enable the researcher to collect data on topics which are aimed particularly to the interests of the researcher in a short period of time. This characteristic of focus group interviews makes them more advantageous compared to participant observation, where the types of the discussions

targeted are not possible to be observed in natural settings outside the group. On the other hand, in the focus group interviews there is an unnatural setting, which is not familiar to the participants; hence the complexities and real-life group dynamics are difficult to observe. Moreover, the researcher as a moderator might also influence the flow of the discussion and therefore the group interaction when s/he attempts to maintain the focus of the discussion. However, such limitations exist in most of the qualitative interview techniques to different degrees and are not unique to focus group interviews (Morgan, 1997: 21; 1998: 31-32).

Strength of focus groups comes from its dependence on group interaction to collect data. The extent and dynamic of the group discussion (interaction between participants, agreements or disagreements within group and comparisons of the experiences of group members) provide “*insights into complex behaviours and motivations*,” that cannot be observed by individual interviews (Morgan and Krueger, 1993: 16-18). The focus group interviews enable the researcher to observe the attitudes and points of view of participants. They also “reveal aspects of experiences and perspectives that would not be accessible without group interaction” (Morgan, 1997: 21). As Morgan (1988: 55) states:

Without the interaction around a researcher-supplied topic, individuals are often safely unaware of their own perspective, and even when they do contemplate their world view, there is not the same effort needed to explain or defend it to someone who sees the world differently. Using focus groups to create such interactions gives ‘the research a set of observations that is difficult to obtain through other methods.

Seen in this light, the data collected from focus group interviews provide tacit and experiential knowledge that is collectively produced by the participants to reflect perspectives and world views of the participants in the study. In addition, the presence of more than one participant provides more relaxed environment for them and they feel less pressured in sharing their opinions and experiences as the others also respond. In this respect, the focus group studies, with their relaxed environment for discussions, are useful to do research on issues people feel more hesitant to express.

Moreover, the interaction between the group members presents “direct evidence on how the participants themselves understand their similarities and differences” (Morgan, 1997: 21). This aspect is unique in the sense that it lets the researcher access to the self-contextualization of the participants’ and each other’s experiences. Furthermore, the spontaneous discussions and group interaction usually provides insights which are not obtained in individual surveys or experiments. Surveys and experiments provide feedback about the world or specific phenomena as conceptualized by the researcher (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990: 141). This is a useful ethic approach, but it should be considered that such conceptualizations may not reflect the respondents’ conceptualizations as they are. Focus group studies are designed to help reflect how individuals contextualize and categorize certain phenomena. In this sense, the data collected by focus groups are “more *emic* than *etic*” (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990: 141).

On the other hand, focus groups’ reliance on group interaction brings out one weakness. It is that the interaction may also influence the nature of the data arising from group discussion. Even though it provides more relaxed environment for discussion, the group presence and the way the discussion evolves in can affect both the way participants express themselves and the content of their opinion. For instance, while some participants may keep some of their opinions they may prefer to express in private, others may sharpen attitudes and reflect more extreme opinions than they would do in private (Morgan, 1996: 15). Researchers are able to collect less data about each of participants, compared to individual in-depth interviews. Here, it is on researcher’s decision to use which method, depending on her/his research question and aims of the study.

In this study, I used a less structured focus group method in which the involvement of researcher (moderator) is low attempting to explore the motivation of young people in the venue selection and the differences in the practices and the perceptions of young people from different organizations: political parties and NGOs.

Less structured focus group studies consist of open-ended questions and low involvement of the moderator to enable participants to explore the topics and express themselves comfortable (Morgan, 1998b: 49). This methodology is used when the researcher aims to discover new insights, perspectives of participants and learn from

their experiences. In this sort of groups, the participants are encouraged by the participants to emphasize the aspects that are important to them most. With fewer questions in comparison to individual interviews leave a space for participants to discuss the broader topic freely and to have more interactive discussion which helps researcher to observe different aspects of the topic in general. This structure makes it more useful for researcher who aims to explore and discover the impacts on certain issues (Morgan, 1997: 40). They also allow researchers to understand basic issues better and can be useful for “*generating hypotheses about new areas of investigation*” and “*in problem identification stage*” (Morgan, 1998a: 12). Since the aims of the researcher are exploratory, the lack of consistency reduced by low level of involvement of the researcher does not constitute a problem.

In focus group studies, the unstandardized content of the discussions make it difficult for across group comparison (Morgan, 1997: 40). But, it should be noted that like in all other qualitative studies, the findings and outcome of the focus group studies are not generalizable.

Furthermore, in addition to all these purposes of exploration, the focus groups are useful to empower the participants and to create awareness by giving voice to the groups which are socially marginalized (Chui, 2003; Madriz, 2003; Johnson, 1996; Padilla, 1993). They also allow participants to articulate on their experiences and come up with “new politics of knowledge” (Johnson, 1996).

In this respect, the focus group studies can be used not to produce scientific “knowledge for understanding,” but also “knowledge for action” (Bagnoli and Clark 2010: 102). Another strength of focus group studies is that since the data collected are produced from everyday experiences of participants, the knowledge, concepts, categorizations and language presented/used by them are also arise from participants’ own definition, and in this way they bridge the scientific language with the language in common sense (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990; Johnson, 1996; Goss, 1996). Moreover, if the focus group studies are applied in the spirit of Participatory Action Research (PAR), they can not only enable the participants to express themselves, but also include them in both the formulation and implementation of solutions (Chui, 2003). In this respect, the focus group studies are commonly used in sociological, psychological and public health research relating to children and young people.

In the current study, the use of focus group design in interviewing young people from two different forms of organizations, political parties and NGOs, in Istanbul has been very useful in several aspects. First, the less structured format of the interviews serves for the explorative purposes of this research, creates a space for young people to express themselves and for us to explore their motivation to involve in politics, their perspectives on the place of their institutions in the political life and their political participation.

Second, the focus group design empowers young people by treating them as experts of their own worlds and as “deserving of rights of consultation” (McEvoy Levy, 2000). It gives them the opportunity to share their own experiences of political participation and what they have gained from their experiences in political life. It is invaluable when we take the lack of opportunities for young people, a group considered to be very passive in political life, to express them and to be the agent of their own participation experiences in Turkey, as young people working on policies concerning themselves.

Last, but not the least, the current focus group study produce “knowledge for action.” The findings contribute to the future policies to understand young people’s understanding of politics and their demands to be more involved in decision-making processes. By giving voice to young people in Turkey, and exploring their motivations and perspectives, the current focus group format can help produce new policies targeting young people whose higher level of involvement in politics is needed in Turkey.

3.3 Questions

In focus group research design, two different questioning categories are often used: topic guide and questioning route.

Topic guide is “*a list of topics or issues to be pursued in the focus group*” (Krueger, 1998: 9). This list includes phrases and words for the moderator to remember the topic of interest. This questioning category is usually used for marketing research.

Whereas, the questioning route consists of arranged questions and conversational sentences prepared in advance (Krueger, 1998: 9). Contrary to the topic guide, the

questioning route is rather more suitable for academic research. Hence, in this research I have used the questioning route strategy to prepare a sequence of questions in complete.

The questioning route enables the researcher to do quality analysis as “*it minimizes subtle differences in questions that could alter the intent*” (Krueger, 1998: 12). Moreover, the questions address the topics precisely that it helps the researcher to have answers related to the topic of interest. However, developing complete question that directly address the related topics requires more time spent on the preparation of the questions (Krueger, 1998: 12).

In focus group interviews, not all questions have the same importance in terms of targeting the topic of interest. The categories of questions in the questioning route are *opening, introductory, transition, key and ending questions*. Different categories of questions have different purposes. The questioning route includes questions from each category (Krueger, 1998: 21).

Table 1: Categories of Questions in Focus Group Interviews

Question Type	Purpose
Opening	Participants get acquainted and feel connected
Introductory	Begins discussion of topic
Transition	Moves smoothly and seamlessly into key questions
Key	Obtains insights on areas of central concern in the study
Ending	Helps researchers determine where to place emphasis and brings closure to the discussion

Source: Krueger, 1998: 21

Opening questions are to be asked in the beginning of the focus group interview. They are designed to start the interview with introductory information about the participants such as name and their occupation (Krueger, 1998: 23). These questions are

not to be analyzed; rather they function as ice-breakers before the discussion on key points.

Introductory questions allow participants to reflect their connection with the overall topic. Participants start talking with opening questions and after that with introductory questions begin the focus of the topic in research (Krueger, 1998: 24).

After introductory questions begin the focus of the topic, *transition questions* help the conversation move towards the questions which drive the focus group study. They set the base for efficient key questions. Different from introductory questions, they seek more in-depth answers from the participants about their experiences. They function as a bridge between the participant and the topic, while introductory questions bring the topic of the research to the surface (Krueger, 1998: 24).

Key questions are the main drives of the study and they are the first ones to be developed while preparing the questioning route. As well, they require the greatest attention while analyzing the focus group interview data. For this reason, the answers to the key questions take longer time than the other questions. Moreover, the moderator often needs probes and pauses for more in-depth analysis (Krueger, 1998: 25).

Lastly, *ending questions* sum the discussion up and allow the participants. There are three different types of ending questions: all-things considered questions, summary question and final question. All-things-considered questions are answered by each participant to allow them reflect on all comments throughout the discussion. On the other hand, after moderator gives an oral summary of the discussion and the key questions, summary question is asked to get the approval of the participants on the adequacy of the summary. Finally, to ensure that the discussion involved all critical points, the moderator provides a short overview of the discussion and asks the participants if there was anything missed (Krueger, 1998: 28). In my questioning route, I have used the *final question* to end the discussion. After a short overview, the participants were asked if they had been willing to raise a point which they had thought was missing.

3.4 Research Sample

3.4.1 Sampling Technique

In this study, focus group interviews with young people in selected NGOs and youth branches of political parties provide the qualitative data. Regarding the qualitative research technique used, non-random sampling is used in order to create the sample. Therefore, the organizations the members of which have participated in focus group interviews were selected according to their relevance to their study, rather than their representativeness of the population.

Unlike quantitative research technique, qualitative research technique does not aim to represent the population or draw a probability sample. Instead, “*qualitative researchers focus on how the sample or small collection of cases, units or activities illuminates social life. The primary purpose of sampling is to collect specific cases, events, or actions that can clarify and deepen understanding*” (Neuman, 2006: 211). Hence, the relevance to the research topic is more important than representativeness in qualitative research technique.

Since, the research technique does not aim to draw probability sample nor represent the population; non-random sampling is more suitable for qualitative research. Among different types of non-random sampling, purposive sampling is used in this study. Purposive sampling refers to “*selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind*” and allows researcher to an informative sample (Neuman, 2006: 213).

As a subcategory of purposive sampling, this study employs snowballing sampling with which the researcher contacts participants via the recommendations and networks of those belonging to initially identified group by the researcher (Bryman, 2004).

3.5 Sites and Participants

Between April and June 2012, I conducted a total of four focus groups with two political parties AKP and BDP; and two NGOs, Habitat Centre for Development and Governance and Lambda.

The focus groups were conducted with different organizations stated above; each of them is aimed to indicate different groups of young people from two different forms of organization.

AKP (Justice and Development Party) is the ruling party in Turkey since November 2002 with increased public support in last three general elections. It is believed that AKP empower its members in their professional lives with the network connection which being a member of AKP provides them. Moreover, AKP pays special attention to its youth branches as they also held a national youth branch congress in April 2012, which is the only example of a nation-wide congress of youth branch of a political party in Turkey. I aim to see if any or all of these has an effect to attract young people to be a member and if it promises any advantages in their future career.

With a new form of catch-all party in Turkish politics; AKP has brought many new people to the political life, who had never been involved in politics. Together with *Siyaset Akademisi*²⁵ which focuses on education of politics in practice; AKP aims to train more young people to get involved in politics. As a young mainstream party which received the half of the votes in the last general elections in Turkey, AKP is important for this study because the focus group study will help us understand the motivations of young people to be a member of a popular catch-all party. Moreover, it also reveals the young people's activities and political involvement in a hierarchal political party. The participants in this study were the members of AKP in Istanbul. The mayor of their district is from AKP and in the district AKP has many supporters. Thus, a participant

²⁵ *Siyaset Akademisi* (Academy of Politics) is a series of seminars provided by AKP to everybody who applies to participate. The first seminars were offered in January 2008. The seminars consist of courses such as Governance and Executive Structure of Turkey, History of Politics in Turkey, Democracy and Culture of Living Together and Political Ethics. The academy aims to increase the political awareness and sensitivity towards political issues, educate new professionals for AKP and Turkey, equip young people and women with knowledge on politics and improve the knowledge and personal property of the current politicians (For more information: <http://www.SiyasetAkademisi.org/index.php/akademi-hakkinda/>)

from AKP in my focus group would help me observe the motivations of those who have chosen to be involved in politics through AKP and what were the new motivations which had never existed for them to actively participate in politics before.

The other political party in the study was BDP (Peace and Democracy party), which is an important organization in Kurdish political movement as the current political party representing the Kurdish minority.

It's a political party which aims/struggles for the recognition of an identity of a relatively marginalized group, Kurds living in Turkey. It also proposes a structural change in the republican nation-state; it distinguishes itself from other political parties as being controversial. I aim to see the motivations of a member of a minority group to be involved in politics in a legitimate political party in the parliament.

The members of the party claim to be fighting for their *cause*; and they mainly focus on the problems of Kurdish minority. Thus, having a participant from BDP would indicate another kind of motivation to be involved in politics, other than interest-based one.

The party structure is unique among the political parties represented in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Their non-hierarchical party structure claims to be more democratic than other political parties with more hierarchical structure. For example, they have co-chairmanship instead of the head of the party. The importance of BDP for this study comes from its nature of involving relatively marginalized groups in Turkey. With the focus group study conducted with young people from BDP, I aim to present the stories of political involvement of young people from relatively marginalized group in Turkey, as well as if the non-hierarchical structure of organization and cause-oriented attitude have any influence on the motivations of young people or if they ever make a change in making a choice of the venue for political participation.

The third focus group interview consisted of young people from Habitat Center for Development and Governance (also referred as Habitat), which was institutionalized as an association by activists of youth of The United Nations Human Settlements (Habitat II) Conferences that were held in Istanbul in 1995. The organization had had different names since its establishment such as *Habitat and Agenda 21 Decisions Implementation* and *Youth for Habitat Association* until it was restructured in 2011, when its name was changed into Habitat Centre for Development and Governance. The aim of the organization is to improve the capacities of youth and support their

participation in local and national decision-making processes²⁶. Habitat has launched projects with different social groups including children, youth, women and disabled people.

Habitat has helped to bring the local, regional and national youth platform together with the aim of enabling young people in decision-making processes. It also contributed a lot to the youth movement in Turkey. Habitat II Summit and later Habitat's establishment are accepted as milestones in the history of youth policies in Turkey.²⁷ There have been significant achievements of the organization concerning youth policies in Turkey. To name some, *National Youth Parliament* and local Youth Assemblies were established with Habitat's initiative. In addition, their campaign to decrease the age to be elected to 25 resulted in a law passed in the parliament in 2008.

As the biggest and most successful youth association in Turkey, the focus group study with Habitat reflects the motivations and determinants of young people's political participation as civic engagement. Since Habitat involves young people from different groups in society, like a catch-all political party, it is important for this study in order to indicate the motivations of young people to be involved in a mainstream NGO. Especially young people participated in the focus group interview contributed very useful and valuable insights about young people's motivations in political participation in Turkey, since they work with young people from all around the country and especially with National Youth Assembly.

The last organization in this study is LambdaIstanbul (also referred as Lambda), an association which aims to make LGBTT community in Turkey more visible and to create more space for LGBTT people in society by working to gain recognition. It's the biggest and oldest LGBTT organization in Turkey. The members have organized and been involved in important events in the history of LGBTT movement in Turkey, such as Pride Week which consists of week-long workshops, film-screenings and discussions on LGBTT issues ending with Pride Walk in Istanbul.

The primary aim of the organization is to mobilize LGBTTs in Turkey. In addition to this, they provide legal consultancy for those who suffer from discrimination

²⁶For more information about Habitat, see also:

<http://www.habitatkalkinma.org/en/html/1069/About+Habitat/>

²⁷ Nemutlu, Gülesin, 2008, *Türkiye Sivil Alanında Gençlik Çalışmasının Tarihsel Gelişimi*, in *Türkiye'de Gençlik Çalışması ve Politikaları*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul p.173.

in society. One of the most important projects of them is *Danışma Hattı (Consultation Line)* which is a hot line for LGBTTs to consult on any legal or personal issue about themselves. The participants from Lambda are a group of young people who fight for recognition of another relatively marginalized group in Turkey, like members of BDP, who have chosen to be involved in politics through an NGO instead of a political party, unlike the participant from BDP. For this reason, LambdaIstanbul is important to reflect the motivations of young people from a relatively marginalized group in Turkey to get involved in an NGO, instead of a political party.

In the focus group interviews, total of 17 young people participated in four groups, 3 female and 14 male. Each group had between 4 and 5 participants, and only three of them were mixed gender. This situation represents the distribution of male and female members in some organizations. Only the focus groups with political parties, AKP and BDP consisted of male participants. Even though I requested to recruit female members from the political parties, BDP group could only arrange the focus group with male members. When asked, they explained this situation as the unavailability of their friends on the day of interview, but not because there are not young females actively working in BDP. But, the replies of AKP group members were more different. They replied as “*we do not exhaust our ladies*”²⁸ and that there were not many female members working in their party organization. The only female members in their local organization were those who are in executive body to fulfil the requirements for gender quota in party organization, which is not equally shared with men. In all groups, the participants were selected through my personal contact, either via friends or my personal visits to the party or NGO organizations. All interviews were conducted in the offices of organizations that were familiar to the participants.

²⁸ “Bayan arkadaşlarımızı yormuyoruz.”

Table 2: Statistical Data on Focus Groups in the Study

Organizations where the focus groups were conducted	Male	Female	Total	Age
AKP	4	-	4	20-27
BDP	4	-	4	20-24
Habitat	4	1	5	20-27
Lambda	(²⁹)	N/A	4	23-30
Total	14	3	17	

When I contacted to the prospected participants, I explained the aims of my research to them. Before the interviews, all of the participants were assured that their identities would be kept confidential and I would not use any of their names. As an ice-breaking, I had short informal conversations with the groups.

The focus group interviews started with all of the participants introducing themselves and their work in their organizations. There were four main questions asked – (1) “What is the reason to choose this organization to be involved in politics?,” (2) “How did you get involved in this organization?,” (3) “Have you ever tried to be involved in a political party/NGO?,” (4) “Do you think there is a difference in form of political participation or effectiveness of the participation through a political party or an NGO?” There was a natural flow of discussions with other introductory and final questions, where in some focus groups, the participants connected the subjects and answered more than one question at once, even before I asked. During the interviews, I had a consultative approach in a loosely structured format in the research design. The

²⁹ The participants from LambdaIstanbul have different sexual orientations from categories of “male” or “female”. The group consisted of one trans, one gay, one lesbian and a participant who cannot put herself neither of the categories. It should be noted that other participants also agreed with the idea of changing gender identities of people through life cycle.

same questions³⁰ were asked in each group, and I assumed the role of moderator in all groups.

I used audio tapes, which is a commonly used method to collect data in focus group interviews. I also informed the participants have the right not to use their names when they introduce themselves and in the rest of the discussions as I assured them to keep their names confidential as well as the audio records.

3.6 Methods to Analyze Focus Group Data

Until recently, there had not been a framework providing different types of qualitative analysis for researchers conducting focus group interviews (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009: 1).³¹ Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) provide a collection of qualitative data analysis techniques for focus group researchers. In addition to the selection of types of data analysis, they also introduce a new method for focus group data analysis – micro-interlocutor analysis. In this section, I will present the methods I use for the analysis of the focus group data collected for this study.

Traditionally, the methods for focus group data analysis include *constant comparison analysis*, *classical content analysis*, *key-words in context* and *discourse analysis*.

In *constant comparison analysis*, there are three stages to follow (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The first stage is *open coding* where the data are divided in small units and each unit is attached to a code or a descriptor. Later in the second stage, which is called *axial coding*, the researcher groups the codes in categories. Finally, in the last stage – *selective coding* – there are themes developed from the groups of codes which reflect the content of each group (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Constant comparison analysis is useful, if there are more than one focus group groups in the same study (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009: 4). This methodology helps the researcher to assess the saturation both in general and across-group saturation. When

³⁰ I only made little changes in the questions that aimed to explore participants' perception of other organization. When asking about the other organization, I changed the word political party with NGO, while interviewing participants from political parties and vice versa.

researchers use more than one focus group to analyze the emergence of the same themes in different groups, such comparison allows them to reach data and/or theoretical saturation. Hence, Onwuegbuzie et al. recommend the researchers designing studies with more than one focus group to have groups to test themes. This is also called *emergent-systemic* focus group: exploratory focus group studies are referred as emergent; and focus group studies used for verification purposes are called *systemic* (Onwuegbuzie, 2009).

This study also consists of multiple focus groups. My analysis will also seek for themes to compare and contrast the focus groups, and young people's motivations in venue selection for political participation.

The second method used in focus group studies is *classical content analysis* which places codes for each chunk of data. Different from constant comparison analysis, the codes are not used to create themes, but to be counted (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Morgan (1997) identifies three categories for classical content analysis for focus group data: the researcher can analyze whether a given code is used by *each participant*, by *each group* or *all instances* of the given code. Onwuegbuzie et al (2009) recommend the researchers to provide information about the frequency of each code together with the description of each code so that they can have a mixed methods content analysis.

The third method is called *keywords-in-context* which is used to determine the use of words in context with others. In other words, this method "*represents an analysis of the culture of the use of the word*" (Fielding & Lee, 1998). The major assumption lying behind the purpose of this methodology is that people use the same words differently in different contexts. Thus, the analysis of how they are used is necessary in some cases. Moreover, this analysis is important for interactive nature of the focus groups to examine the contexts within the words (Onwuegbuzie et al, 2009). This method requires the contextualization of words that are used to develop themes or theory by the analysis of words used before and after keywords, which eventually lead to an analysis of the culture from the use of the word (Fielding and Lee, 1998). This method can be used across focus groups, within one focus group or for an individual in a focus group (Onwuegbuzie et al, 2009).

The last method used in focus group data analysis is called *discursive* psychology which is a type of discourse *analysis*. This method was developed by social psychologists who argued that “*to understand social interaction and cognition, it is essential to study how people communicated on a daily basis*” (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). In this kind of discourse analysis, unique segments or constituent of language use are analyzed to examine how different elements and their versions such as experiences, society and institutions exist in discourse (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002).

In addition to these traditional methods for focus group data analysis, Onwuegbuzie et al (2009) have introduced a new methodology to analyze the focus group data from a new perspective: micro-interlocutor analysis “*wherein meticulous information about which participant responds to each question, the order in which each participant responds, response characteristics, the nonverbal communication used, and the like is collected, analyzed, and interpreted.*” (Onwuegbuzie et al, 2009: 1).

The unit of analysis for focus groups has mostly been the focus groups. This approach lacks the opportunity to analyse the individuals in the focus groups. In other words, when the unit of analysis is the focus group, the contributions or the lack of contribution (e.g. silence) of individuals within focus groups are ignored (Onwuegbuzie et al, 2009):

These focus group members might include those who are relatively silent (e.g., members who are too shy to speak about this issue; members who do not want to reveal that they have a different opinion, attitude, experience, level of knowledge, or the like; members who do not deem this issue to be worth discussing), members who are relatively less articulate, members who have a tendency to acquiesce to the majority viewpoint, and members who are not given the opportunity to speak (e.g., due to one or more members dominating the discussion, due to insufficient time for them to speak before the moderator moves on to the next question).

In this respect, the authors also recommend that researchers should provide, in addition to the quotations, observations on the participants who are a part of the consensus from which the themes emerge.

Moreover, information regarding the number or proportion of participants who reflected opposing view as well as those who did not express any view at all or remained

silent (Onwuegbuzie, 2009). The approval or rejection of the views expressed by other group members can be reflected either verbal or nonverbal.

In my analysis, I would also benefit from this new method to analyse focus group data, together with constant comparison analysis and key-words-in-context analysis.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS

The aims of this chapter are; to summarize the discussions in the focus groups, to analyse young people's motivation in being involved in politics in Turkey through either political parties or NGOs, and to reflect their thoughts and understanding of politics in Turkey. Each group is analyzed separately in order to make it easier to see different motivations and understandings of each group. In addition, their feedback, nonverbal contributions and off-record discussions are reflected.

4.1 AKP Youth Branch

The focus group at AKP Youth Branch was conducted with young people aged between twenty and twenty-seven; four male participants were present. The participants were the members of AKP Youth Branch, from a relatively new organization after the establishment of the municipality few years ago.

Three of the participants were students, and one of them was an employee in a private company.

At first, they explained their activities within the party in general, as they referred to be involved in election campaigns, organizing committee of seminars/commemorate ceremonies to introduce the influential people on party's ideology (e.g. Turkish writers/poets such as Mehmet Akif and Necip Fazıl), *Siyaset Akademisi*, and other social activities.

For their own living area, they aim to provide a social life to the young people in their neighbourhood, which they cannot access otherwise. They organize sports activities, picnics and sometimes they take young people in the neighbourhood to the cinema, since they do not have one in the neighbourhood. With these activities, they aim to improve relations among young people, provide them the social activities they cannot easily reach and build friendship among the participants.

When it comes to the attendance in election campaigns or congresses, they are proud of their *success* in taking the biggest number of participants to such activities. They put a big emphasis on their success in national youth branch congress which took place in April 2010 in Ankara. But here, the *success* is referred to the ability to bring the biggest number of people and this helped them have better reputation in the eyes of

those in higher positions in the party organization. The dialogue below reflects their understanding of *success*:

- *And here, our municipality had the biggest number of participants among all others from Istanbul, we were successful.* ³²
- *There is even this, there had been more of us, but they told that the demand was high, and we had to cancel the buses from few neighbourhoods.*³³

In this light, they believe that they are successful in participation, because they could take the biggest number of participants from their organization to the national congress of AKP Youth Branches.³⁴ In such a case, the biggest number might also mean more influence in the election of national youth branch committee and policy making for young people in politics. But, their emphasis was on the *number* of young people they took to the congress, instead of how *influential* they could be in decision-making processes.

In addition to these, they actively work in making propaganda during pre-election periods. Their activities vary from hanging flags around the neighbourhood to making slogans for party propaganda. As well as this, they do regular neighbourhood meetings, where they get together with the residents in their neighbourhood and listen to their needs, and to help those who have financial difficulties. They provide them their basic needs, such as food, which is a big criticism towards the ruling party as a tool to attract the voters. These meetings provide them the opportunity to improve relations for party publicity.

³²“Ve bu da İstanbul’dan bütün ilçelerden en fazla katılımı giden bizim ilçemiz oldu yani, onda da başarılı olduk.”

³³“Hatta şöyle bir şey var, biz daha fazla gidiyorduk, dediler ki çok büyük katılım var, yoğun katılım var, biz birkaç mahalleden otobüsleri iptal ettik.”

³⁴The third regular Youth Branches Congress of Ak Parti was held in Ankara in 29th April 2012. In this congress, the delegates voted to elect the head of the central youth branch of AKP. With the prime minister and some other members of the government present in the congress venue, it was such a take over ceremony. All youth branch organizations from all over the country were present in the congress venue, together with young people from different parts of the world, including Canada, the Maldives and Jordan.

Siyaset Akademisi, which is a series of seminars on history and contemporary Turkish politics etc, has made them familiar with political terms and history. They all believe that it has been very helpful for them to comprehend the politics in Turkey today. Moreover, they all think that the certificate they get from Siyaset Akademisi is helpful for their future career in AKP.

The social activities they organize aim to create friendship among the participants, as well as to the *professional* relations among them. In this way, they become closer to each other as they also become friends. On the other hand, they organize trips to historic sites, such as Çanakkale, which is a popular destination for Islamic-nationalist groups in Turkey in recent years, to make party membership more attractive. But, they also stress the need for more financial resources to have such activities more often. They think, more financial resources are directly related to having closer relations with party members in higher bodies, such as the mayor:

- ... *There is a problem with distribution and justice (within party). It is related to the vision of the head of local party organization. As I said before, another head of the organization can do... I don't know how they do, buy maybe they have good relations with the head of local party organization.*³⁵
- *Exactly, some other heads of the local party organization or old mayors of districts care about youth and support them. They provide both fiscal and financial support.*³⁶

As mentioned above, they believe that better relations with those in power bring more resources for party activities. This also shows that without the support from the party in general, they are limited to certain activities to reach young people.

³⁵ ... Dağılım konusunda, adalet konusunda sıkıntı var. bu da ilçe başkanının vizyonuyla misyonuyla ilgili bir şey. Dedim ya biraz önce, oradaki ilçe başkanı şey yapabiliyor. Belki nasıl yapıyor, ben de çözebilmiş değilim ama belki belediye başkanıyla çok arası iyi, kendi arasını belediye başkanıyla iyi tutuyor.

³⁶ Kesinlikle öyle, eski ilçe başkanları ya da belediye başkanları gençliğe çok sahip çıkıyorlar. O yüzden maddi manevi imkan sağlıyorlar.

When we look at how they started being involved in party politics, all of them refer to the family background. It is either someone from family who was involved in party or the political attitude and ideology dominant within the family. All of the participants say that they come from families with *conservative, religious and nationalist* background. Except one of the participants, AKP is their first venue to be involved in politics. One participant, which was the eldest among all, had been a member of different political parties through his school life, MHP and Saadet Partisi, and at the end has become an AKP member due to the changes in mainstream politics.

His political activities first started in *Ülkü Ocakları*, the youth branch of MHP (Nationalist Movement Party). His uncle, who was the head of *Ülkü Ocakları* in Istanbul back then, had influenced him and he started participating in their activities. He tells his story in political parties as follows:

- *For example, I was raised in Ülkü Ocakları; I was in the fifth grade and going to Ülkü Ocakları. There, the aim of young people is just when there is a fight, 15-20 people from Ülkü Ocakları go there. This was their aim. Then, I thought it wasn't going to give me anything, anything to learn, and I continued in Saadet Partisi.*³⁷

As he refers it as *being raised* in the organization, his ideological background was shaped during his visits and socialization period in MHP. What had attracted him was when Islamism was more dominant ideology in the party:

- *It was very good in the beginning. Again at the beginning, Islamism had priority, and that attracted us. Then, when nationalism came before, we grew away from (the party). This happened due to our family background, that's why we continued in Saadet (Partisi).*³⁸

³⁷ Mesela ben Ülkü Ocaklarında yetiştim, ilkokul 5'e gidiyordum ben Ülkü Ocakları'na gidiyordum. Orada, insanların geliş amacı sadece işte kavga olduğu zaman Ülkü Ocakları'nda 15-20 kişi çullanırlar bir insanın üstüne. Bu amaçla geliyorlardı. Sonra, oradan ben baktım hani bize buradan bir şey çıkmaz, bir şey öğreneceğimiz yok, sonra Saadet partisine devam ettim.

³⁸ İlk zamanlarda çok güzeldi. Yine ilk başta, İslamcılık önce geliyordu, o da bizi cezbediyordu. Ama sonra milliyetçilik ön plana çıktığı için bu bizi biraz soğuttu. Aile yapısından dolayı biraz soğuttu bizi. Onu için Saadet'e geçtik.

All of the political parties he has been involved in (MHP, Saadet and AKP) have both nationalistic and Islamist backgrounds. But apparently, his family's political attitude has more influence on him than he did not solely follow the party politics; instead, he started looking for new venues which will be more suitable for his own ideology, in this case, it was Islamism.

In addition to this, the socialization process in *Ülkü Ocakları*, which is one of the main reasons for school boys to go there, did not attract him much. He was looking for more ideologically meaningful activities, instead of having a certain network in *Ülkü Ocakları*, and he found it in Saadet Partisi:

- *In the beginning, the activities were very interesting, then we were moving to religious topics, and honestly, this influenced us. It was better for us... It was the same in Saadet Partisi, a new organization is always better for Turkey. In the end, there is this in our society, the citizens of Turkey... There is sympathy for oppressed as they always support them. With this sympathy, we came to AKP. In our neighbourhood, I had a friend. He told me that he was going to be the head of the neighbourhood organization and asked for my help. 50-60 % of my neighbourhood is my relative. I told him that I would help; there would not be a problem. This is how I started, and I met all these friends.*³⁹

Even though the influence of Islamism in party's ideology had attracted him in the beginning, Saadet Partisi could not become his ideal venue for participation that he decided to be involved in the new party arose from Saadet Partisi, which was AKP. At the end, he has become a member of AKP after his friend's request to join them.

³⁹ İlk başlarda aktiviteler falan böyle hoş geliyordu, sonra yavaş yavaş dini konulara giriliyordu, bu da bize daha şevk veriyordu açıkçası. Daha güzel oluyordu bizim için... Saadet Partisi'nde de dediğim gibi, her zaman için yeni bir oluşum daha iyi TR için. Sonuçta bizim halkımız da, TC'deki vatandaşlarda şu var. her zaman ezilenlerin yanında olduğu için bir sempati vardır. Biz de bu sempati ile beraber AK Partiye geldik. Malkoçoğlu'nda çok sevdiğim bir arkadaşım vardı, bana dedi ki ben mahalle başkanlığı yapacağım, bana yardımcı olur musun dedi. Oturduğum mahalle de %50-60 benim kendi akrabalarımından oluşuyor. Dedim yardımcı olurum, sıkıntı yok dedim. Sonra öyle başladık. Buradaki arkadaşlarımızla tanıştık...

Not only was his, the other participants' active membership in AKP again a result of their family relations or families' ideological background. They have become members as a group of friend after they were *invited* to the neighbourhood committee. They also link this invitation with their level of education, which is the highest in the district. The most influential factor for their choice of AKP seems to be their family, relatives or friends:

- *We are all coming from conservative families. We have certain opinions suitable to our families. All the times, in high school, our friends from the school, that we socialized together, we all had similar political opinions. We all had the same cause. We all joined party organizations together and we understood our duty according to our points of view and fulfilled (our duty).*⁴⁰

They care about the political background of their families and they look for a place in which they can express themselves best accordingly with their ideology and that can provide them activities which are most suitable for their worldview. But at the end of the day, all of them are more politicized than other members of their families, whose political participation is limited to voting.

Another dominant theme in their discussion was the need for more sincerity among members of the party, which cannot exist with only professional relations, but friendship. The issue of sincerity is a result of the rivalry within party organization in general:

- *Because the politics in the youth branch should be built on sincerity, but it is not like that at the moment. Because, it is like this in general. I don't say this only for our organization, we have friends in all other districts. When I ask them how things are going, everybody has*

⁴⁰Muhafazakar ailelerden geliyoruz. Yapı itibariyle, artık aileye uygunluk itibariyle belli bir fikre sahip oluyoruz. Gördük geçirdiğimiz süreç boyunca lise hayatımızda, öğrenim hayatımızda birlikte olduğumuz arkadaş grubu ile birlikte sosyal aktivite veyahut siyasi görüşlerimiz hep birbirine yakın. Hep beraber bir yola baş koyduk. Hep beraber parti teşkilatlarına girdik. Görevimizi kendi bakış açımıza göre en iyi şekilde idrak ettik, yerine getirdik.

*something... We usually don't have good relations with those who oppose (us). It is the same for almost everyone.*⁴¹

As one of the dominant themes in their discussion, *sincerity* is very important for AKP members. They believe that they can only be effective, if the members of the party organization are honest (frank) and sincere to each other. This is also related to how they became members of the party. Since they all came to the party through their social networks, they are willing to have such relation with the party organization as well. This sincerity issue came out when they discussed the municipality, in particular mayor, using its/his power to change the outcome of the small-scale election of the administrative body. They argue that it is difficult to elect a candidate if he has not got the support from the municipality.

Apparently, the lack of sincerity in the organization discourages them. Before and after the discussions, when the discussion somehow went on off-record, some of the participants said that they do not feel very comfortable in the party as they used to do. The rivalry to get better positions within the party has a discouraging influence on them which may even result to give up the membership, as some participants mentioned.

When asked what kind of obstacles they have before their political activities, they said that the high level of circulation of the young members in the party avoids them from being effective. It happens quite often that young people have to leave their local organization and move to another city for higher education. On the other hand, they complain about lack of responsibility and interest of young people that prevent them from making commitments to the party, hence some young members leave the party very easily even before they start efficiently working. In addition to these, they also revealed that all the work they do within the party takes lots of their time, as it also distracts them when they need to focus on their studies.

⁴¹ Çünkü gençlik kollarındaki siyaset samimiyet üzerine kurulması gerekirken, samimiyet üzerine kurulu değil şu an. Çünkü genel anlamda böyle. Ben sadece bizim ilçemiz için söylemiyorum, her yerde arkadaşlarımız var. Soruyorum, işte nasıl gidiyor falan filan, herkeste bir şeyler var yani... Zıt olduğumuz insanlarla zaten samimiyetimiz genelde pek olmuyor. Bu hemen hemen herkesi geçeri.

With such commitments, they seek to get something in return. In this aspect, the discussion focused on the election of the administrative body of the youth branch. At some point, they mentioned that there is from top to bottom process in the election of the administrative body:

- *Also, there aren't people who come from the bottom of the organization, they are always precluded. Those with financial power come from top. This damages the organization. Because, they don't know the traditions of the organization and they don't care when people say something. They always think they are there with their financial power and believe that they will not be removed.⁴²*

This process is another thing that discourages them. As mentioned in the discussion, those who get in the administrative body with their network attained through their economic relations damage both the party's reputation and effective work within the party.

At the same time, there is a striking contrast between these concerns and the discussion at the end of the focus group meeting. There, they revealed completely opposing situation when they gave the example of a member of the party being unable to get a position even though he was a nephew of one of the ministers in the government:

- *For example, in the past there was this, the pressure from the top (of the organization), people got positions with other people's support. I clearly remember that, the nephew of a minister could only get in the commission of the province, his real nephew... Now you get what you deserve. If you put an effort in, it is evaluated and put you in a position.*

⁴²Bir de artikeskisigibitabandanyetişip de yukarıyadoğruçikaninsanlaryok, hep önükesiliyor.Maddi gücü olan insanlar direk tepeden indiriliyor. Bu da teşkilata çok büyük zararlar veriyor. Çünkü teşkilatçılığı bilmediği için insanlar bir şey söylediği zaman umursamıyor. Sonuçta diyor ben burada para gücümle duruyorum diyor. Buradan beni bir şekilde gönderemezler diyor.

*But, if you don't put any (effort in) and you try to use your networks; it doesn't work anymore.*⁴³

Here, they make a comparison between the higher administrative body and the local organization body. According to them, some local organizations use their power and abuse the decision-making process as they have from top to bottom approach to the local administrative body. But on the other hand, they indicate their amazement to the approach in AKP in general, as they follow from bottom to top approach.

When it comes to active politics, one of the most interesting points they refer as doing politics is how hard they can *defend* their party. According to them, the harder you can defend your party or the politicians in your party, the better member you are:

- ... *We sit on the table, if anybody says anything to our party, we give the appropriate answer...*⁴⁴

In this light, partisanship is what they understand from party membership. As young members of the party, they never mentioned any sort of activity which enables them to effect decision-making processes or policy making itself. A polarized political life dominated their discussion, as people either harshly criticize AKP, the ruling party in Turkey, or support them. They claim that the young members of other parties, especially the opposition, have grudges towards their party, hence they feel the need to defend their party instead of discussing the policies and attitudes.

Their approach to the constitution writing gives hints about how independently they work from the party. When asked if they do any workshop or prepare any task about the new constitution, regarding the constitutional rights of young people in

⁴³Mesela, eskiden şey vardı, yukarıdan abilerin baskısı vardı işte birilerinin ismiyle bir yerlere gidiliyordu. Şimdi öyle bir şey yok. Ben çok iyi hatırlıyorum ki, bir bakanımızın yeğeni yıllardır il komisyonunda ve daha yeni girebildi il yönetimine. Öz yeğeni... İş artık öyle bir emeğin karşılığını alıyorsun. Eğer emeğin varsa, o emeğe değer biçiliyor ve o noktaya getiriyorlar seni. Ama eğer emeğin yok da ben şunun yeğeniyim, ya şununla şöyle geldim, o isimler artık sökmüyor yani.

⁴⁴...Biz hani gideriz otururuz masada, birisi partimize bir laf söylerse gereken cevabı veririz...

particular, they replied as it should first come to the parliament's agenda, and consequently to the party's, and then they will work on it if it will be necessary. This tells something about how they set their agenda. If an issue, or a task is in the party's agenda, and if they are told, they work on it. There is not an independent work done on such subjects, as young members of the party, as young citizens, in order to pass youth perspective on the new constitution. In addition to this, they believe that people will deliver their requests on relevant changes in constitution via citizens' initiatives, with which citizens can directly write to the parliament and make requests, and for this reason they do not feel the necessity to prepare a task for changes in the constitution. This also shows that they rely so much on the party's tasks when it comes to hot topics. This is opposite of the workshops held by NGOs I interviewed with, which I will discuss later in the relevant sections.

Lastly, they see NGOs as supplementary organizations to the political parties in the political arena. They are all members of *townsman* associations, and they see the membership in these associations as a key to get support in party politics. In this respect, according to them, NGOs are not one of the main actors in politics, but are means to attain power in political parties, which are the main and only actors in politics. If one has a certain network in townsman associations, the party invites that person to join them in order to get the votes of the members of that association. Hence, at the end of the day, that person becomes the spokesperson of the association and they do not need to be independent actors in politics. As supplementary actors to the political parties, the NGOs fulfil their duty as they support the political parties, which is inevitable for them since the political parties are the power possessors.

To sum up the discussions in this focus group, the young people in selected AKP youth branch started participating in politics through their social networks, either families or friends. Their families' ideological background, which is nationalist and religious conservative, has always been influential in their choice of political party. They consider the political parties as the only actors in political arena, whereas they see NGOs as supplementary organizations to support political parties. On the other hand, they complained about from-top-to-bottom processes in party politics, in which social networks and connections are very useful to get in a certain position. Finally, their discussion reflected that partisanship is what they understand from doing politics in

political parties, instead of being actively involved in decision-making processes or proposing new youth policies.

4.2 BDP Youth Branch

The focus group at BDP Youth Branch was conducted with four young people aged between twenty- two and twenty-four, all of whom were male. The participants were the members of Istanbul BDP Youth Branch, and had been working with the party's youth branches in their hometowns before they moved to Istanbul for higher education. All of the participants were university students, which is their reason to come to Istanbul from Eastern Turkey.

They all defined their activities within party as politics aiming the enhancement of a relatively marginalized group within society and continuation of what they had been doing during their school life.

- *So, the arguments BDP uses in politics are more... Political arguments are those related to the events that deeply affected a group of people in the society.*⁴⁵

In this light, their activities mainly focus on Kurdish minority's problems and their recognition in Turkey.

In addition to that, they aim to keep young people, who come to Istanbul for higher education, together and safe against *wild capitalism*, not to lose their identity. There are two reasons that avoid them from doing social activities like other political parties or youth associations: first, the on-going war in Eastern Turkey between the state and PKK (Kurdish guerrilla group) from which their friends or family members suffer; and second, the prejudices towards them that every event they will organize, such as summer camps, will be considered as PKK propaganda and eventually prevented by the state.

⁴⁵Yani BDP'nin siyaset yaptığı argümanlar biraz daha şeydir yani. Genel toplumun belli bir kesimini derinden etkileyen olaylar üzerinden siyasi argümanlarını sunar.

According to them, the politics has always been in the centre of their lives. As they say, they all were born to a reality where there were a lot of pain and political struggle for identity. This is also how they became a part of the party. All of them have a family member in Kurdish political movement, in BDP or in prison due to their political activism, as well as friends from school who joined PKK to fight against Turkish army in the mountains. Hence, the politics consists of a big part of their daily lives and their social interactions. Almost every day, they join a protest organized by either BDP or other organizations supporting Kurdish political movement.

Due to their family stories and ethnic background, they all have emotional ties with party politics as well. Even one of them defined party as his family; since he was taken care by the party when he was seven while both of his parents were in prison due to their political activism as Kurds living in Eastern Turkey. All of them first visited the party with a family member. Eventually, they have become even more active than their siblings or relatives who took them to the party for the first time.

According to them, the biggest obstacle before them in political life is the very limited space left for them (Kurds in general) to do politics. They complain about the dominance of the ruling party, political oppression towards the opposition and the lack of opportunities to express themselves, due to the lack of objective representation of the situation in Eastern Turkey by the media. From their point of view, this is the biggest obstacle before the peace as well. In addition to this, the ongoing war is limiting what they can do in politics, because coming to an end in the war becomes the priority in their activities.

Their activities in the party vary from projects for students in prison for political activism or their Kurdish identity (as they refer), to *Siyaset Akademisi* of BDP and political activism as human shields in the war zone.

In Istanbul particularly, they try to keep university students, who come to Istanbul from Eastern Turkey, within the network. With seminars, they aim to create awareness about the capitalist system, which is, according to them, is one of the biggest threats against them. By protecting young Kurdish people in Istanbul from capitalism they are not used to living with, BDP youth branch helps them protect their culture and identity while they pursue their political activism. They also offer music courses in Youth

Culture Centres for them to improve themselves culturally. But at the same time, they avoid activities to have fun, such as football tournaments or concerts. The reason for this is again the ongoing war in their hometowns:

- *For example, this year in Marmara (University), we offered to have a football tournament. I made the suggestion, I said let's play football. My friends objected. They told me no, we can't have a football tournament. I asked why. Eventually, the day I made the suggestion, five female guerrillas were killed by chemical weapons in Kurdistan. They said that we can't play football even for socialising purposes. Because our perspective on life is different.*⁴⁶

Since most of them have either relatives or friends in the rebellion groups, they cannot really differentiate themselves from them, and eventually they cannot stay away from the war and its influence on politics. At the end of the day, politics becomes the centre of their life. As they identify it, *"If you live in Turkey, especially in Eastern Turkey, politics is inevitably in the centre of your life."*⁴⁷ Hence, they have a completely different perspective for life from other young people in this study.

They also join the *Siyaset Akademisi* in order to understand the world and the socio-economic system to be better citizens. They do not see it as a tool for future political career like AKP members, but to understand the capitalist system dominating the world today and to be able to create alternatives for it.

Similar to the participants in AKP, the participants in BDP focus group also started being involved in political parties through their family or relatives. All of the participants have family members both in the party and Kurdish political movement. When asked, they consensually state that they all were

⁴⁶Yani mesela biz bu sene Marmara'da dedik, Marmara Üniversitesi'nde futbol turnuvası yapalım. Hani öneriyi ben yaptım, yani dedim biraz futbol oynayalım... Arkadaşlar karşı çıktılar. Yani bana dediler hayır futbol turnuvası yapamayız. Niye dedim, neden? O gün yani ben bu öneriyi yaparken meğerse şeymiş yani Kürdistan'da çıkan çatışmada kimyasal silahla beş kadın gerilla öldürülmüş. Hani dedi yani, böyle bir süreçte hani sosyallik için olsa dahi gidip futbol oynayamayız. Bizim çünkü hayata bakış açımız farklıdır yani.

⁴⁷Eğer Türkiye'de yaşıyorsan, özellikle de Doğu'da, politika kaçınılmaz olarak hayatının merkezi oluyor.

born to the party. Their reality, as they call it, has brought them to the party. According to them, as Kurds fighting for their rights in Eastern Turkey, it is inevitable not to be a member of the party. They do not necessarily refer to a formal membership; regular visits and attendance to the party's events eventually make one person a part of the political party. Both for the family members and their life experiences, they have emotional ties to the party. They all have been involved in high school committees of the party and this was how they started their active political participation.

One of the participants said that the ideological unity and Kurdish identity make them feel comfortable within the party:

- *I am personally more comfortable with BDP. I am comfortable because most of the people think in the same way as I do. And their struggle is nothing different from mine. I also face with the same problems. So, I am interested in those problems as someone who is facing them.*⁴⁸

Such ties provide them a space where they can be themselves and have a sense of belonging.

They believe that the priorities in politics for opposition groups are important that they can follow a path in order to pursue their politics. In this sense, the ongoing war in Eastern Turkey is at the top of their list of priorities. Apparently, this situation limits the young people in Kurdish political movement in a way that they cannot do any kind of activity other than those related to the ongoing war in Eastern Turkey.

When it comes to the party organization, they claim to be completely free from other bodies of the party. They also point out that they cannot really have very different outcomes from the other bodies, as they share the same ideology and vision with all other bodies of the party. But, at the same time the practices may vary in

⁴⁸Yani hani ben bireysel olarak BDP de daha rahatım. Şundan dolayı daha rahatım: insanların çoğu benim gibi düşünüyor. Ve verdikleri mücadele de benimkinden farklı değil yani. Zaten ben de aynı sorunları yaşıyorum. Hani o sorunların çözümüyle ilgilenirken sorunu yaşayan birisi olarak ilgileniyorum.

different segments of Kurdish politics and its reflection on in-party policy making processes may happen to be different at the end, such as youth branch opposing the other bodies or politicians. At some point, they mention the occasions where youth branch *warned* and harshly criticized politicians from higher bodies of the party in order to show how independent they are from other segments of the party. But at the end they all think that since everybody in the party have the same ideology and goal with similar backgrounds, everybody aim to do similar sort of activities. They believe that there is no reason for anyone in the party organization to limit or to intervene in their activities.

In addition to this, the venue selection in doing politics is also important for them. In which, they believe party politics is the priority and more influential than other channels of political participation. Even though some of the participants also work for NGOs such as Human Rights Association (IHD), they believe that political parties are the main actors of political life and what they refer as political arena means party politics.

In this respect, one of the participants defined the political parties as both the *producers* and *consumers* of politics. Moreover, when they compare the influence of political parties and the NGOs on the popular political agenda, their conclusion is that it is the political parties that set the political agenda:

- They (political parties and NGOs) are integrated, but the core of the politics is the political party. Not only for BDP. Today, when Tayyip Erdoğan says something, it becomes a hot topic. It's political party. But, when the head of an NGOs speaks, it does not become such a hot topic. It only makes them involve in politics.⁴⁹

In this light, they believe that the core of the politics is the political parties. And in this political arena, NGOs are only a part of political life, but the main actors.

⁴⁹İç içe geçiyorlar ama şeydir yani siyasetin dibi siyasi partidir. Sadece BDP için değil yani. Bugün Tayyip Erdoğan konuşur, gündem olur. Bu siyasi partidir yani. Ama aynı şekilde başka bir STK başkanı konuşursa öyle bir gündem olmaz yani. Sadece siyasete dahil olmuş olur yani.

However, they mention the traditional approach to young people in party organization in rural areas, as young people are supposed to do most of the physical work they are told to do in party offices. But they added that this never happens in the party organization in Istanbul and other big cities.

The participant, who is actively working in an NGO, Human Rights Association (IHD), distinguishes what he is doing in the NGO from his activities in the party:

- In general, NGOs are different from the political parties. NGOs don't do politics. They are sensitive to social problems, and work on particular problems.⁵⁰

The description above reflects his perception of NGOs. As the one being involved in both an NGO and a political party, when he made this distinction, other participants agreed with him. According to them, the NGOs working sphere is limited, since they are more issue-based compared to the political parties.

Moreover, they also believe that the NGOs don't do politics, but act with the support of different political parties. Keeping IHD aside, they believe that most of the NGOs in Turkey are supported by certain political parties:

- It's difficult to say for NGOs in general in Turkey. Because, you find an NGO, and the dominant establish another NGO against yours. They establish their own associations.⁵¹

In this light, we can come to the conclusion that they perceive the NGOs as the battlegrounds of political parties, through which they can pursue their informal politics according to their ideologies.

Furthermore, they see some NGOs as *extensions* of the political parties; again as they distinguish some of the NGOs from the rest:

⁵⁰Genel olarak STK'ların partilerden farkı vardır.STKlar siyaset yapmazlar. Toplumsal sorunlara duyarlıdır, belli sorunların üzerinde çalışırlar.

⁵¹Genel olarak STK adına bir şey demen zordur Türkiye'de. Çünkü sen bir tane STK buluyorsun, egemen olan senin karşına zaten kendi STK sını kuruyor. Kendi derneğini kuruyor.

- *As the connection, I don't see them as sub-organizations of political parties. There are some like that. But, at least I don't see IHD that way. If it was like this, I would only join BDP. Because, seriously, it may sound funny, but sometimes we go here and there from morning till evening. We go somewhere. You have to go. In such circumstance, I would only go to BDP. I wouldn't go there (IHD) additionally. But, they are different, from where they look at is different.⁵²*

As mentioned above, the reason he was also involved in IHD was the difference in their perspective and activities from BDP. Even though, the dominant worldview, such as human rights and aim to empower those who suffer from injustices, is similar in both of those organizations, their form of organization and especially their power to influence the active politics differ:

- *They tried to create awareness, but there is this situation. The group that try to create awareness faces another obstacle: media. If I burned myself down here, if this is not reflected to the mass, I would have done it myself alone.⁵³*

In the excerpt above, NGOs are referred to be the organizations aiming awareness-building. Together with this, they believe that the NGOs are less effective than the political parties in general:

- *I can say less effective. I can comfortably say that they are less effective...⁵⁴*

⁵²Bir bağıntı olarak da, bir siyasi partinin alt kuruluşudur diye bakmıyorum. Öyle olanlar var, uzantısı olanlar var. Ama en azından yani İHD'ye öyle bakmıyorum. Öyle olsa zaten sadece BDP'de görev alırdım. Çünkü şeydir ciddi anlamda hani bugün komik gelebilir ama bazenbiz sabahtan akşama kadar gidip geliyoruz yani. Bir yerlere gidip geliyoruz. Hani gitmek zorundasın. Hani böyle bir ortamda ikisi aynı olsa ben sadece BDP ye giderim. Ekstra oraya gitmem yani. Ama farklıdır yani, baktıkları yerler farklıdır.

⁵³Bir duyarlılık yaratmaya çalıştılar ama, şöyle de bir durum var yani. Duyarlılık yaratmaya çalışan kesim de hani ikinci bir engelle karşılaşıyor: medya. Yani bugün ben burada kendimi yakayım, bu belli kitlelere yansımadağı zaman sadece kendim yapmış olurum.

⁵⁴Daha az etkili diyebilirim. Rahatlıkla daha az etkili diyebilirim...

- *As a result, what the political parties or the politicians say are covered in the media. They make the real agenda.⁵⁵*

As seen in the discussion above, in these young people's perspective, NGOs are the organizations that are issue-based, less effective due to the lack of attention towards them and eventually in some cases the sub-organizations of political parties.

Their lack of efficiency is also the result of the absence of their electoral support as they are more hesitant to act:

- *There is this in the political parties... Since public support is always visible, you cannot denigrate them. So, no matter they say that BDP is violent or call Kurdish leader baby killer, people believe in them. You can't make those people abandon (them). But İHD or NGOs don't have such base.⁵⁶*

In this respect, he believes that as the political parties get the popular support, they are braver to act than the NGOs are.

At last, when asked what they would like to do if the war, which is their priority in their political activities, ends, the participant who also works in İHD replied as he would like to be in an NGO rather than the political party. His reason to work in the political party more actively than the NGO now is the power of the political party to do something.

Overall, the discussions in this focus group study represent these young people's reality as the ongoing war in Eastern Turkey and the disadvantages Kurdish minority

⁵⁵Sonuçta, asıl siyasi partilerin ve siyasilerin söyledikleri medyada yer alıyor. Asıl gündemi onlar belirliyorlar.

⁵⁶Siyasi partilerde şey vardır yani halk desteği her zaman ön planda olduğundan dolayı onu halkın gözünde karalayamazsın. Hani sen BDP ye ne kadar bunlar işte yakıp yıkıyorlar desen de, ya da Kürt halk liderine ne kadar bebek katili desen de, insanlar ona inanmış. Ondan vazgeçiremezsin. Ama İHD lerin STK ların böyle bir tabanı yok işte.

faces are the centre of their lives and any sort of political activity they are involved in. They all were born into politically active families and eventually have been within the party politics since their childhoods. It is very visible in the discussions that the war is the biggest obstacle before widening the space for political activities. Similar to the participants in AKP focus group, they perceive the NGOs as supplementary actors to the political parties in the political arena. They believe that they should stay in party politics since political parties are more powerful and effective. At the same time, according to them, the NGOs do not manipulate people; hence, they would like to pursue their political activities in NGOs if the war ends one day.

4.3 Habitat

Youth for Habitat is a unique NGO which works solely on youth. Their activities and projects aim to empower young people in Turkey and enhance their participation both in local and national level.

The participants in this focus group provided some of the most in depth and elaborate arguments on youth political participation in Turkey. It is also because of the foundations of Habitat which works hard on enhancing youth political participation in Turkey.

The group consisted of five participants, one female and four male. The age range of the participants was between twenty and twenty-seven. Their activities in Habitat vary from volunteer works to internship and professional project managers.

They define their activities as aiming to enhance the potential of young people to participate in decision-making processes and making policies to increase the level of youth political participation in Turkey. In this light, they have different roles in their projects. Their first aim is to make the output of their projects and workshops a public policy. They believe that if it becomes a public policy at the end, it provides the structures for young people to be more involved in decision-making processes. The best example for this is the change in the age to be elected in 2006. At the end of the campaign National Youth Parliament started and Habitat supported, the age to be elected in the parliament was decreased to 25 in 2006.

Secondly, they bring the public and private sector together in their projects. This usually happens when they launch a project at local level involving private companies and local administrations. A good example for this is the project of *Bilenler Bilmeyenlere Bilgisayar Öğretiyor* (BBBÖ)⁵⁷ where they bring companies like Microsoft with Ministry of Development, the UN and young people. In such joint projects, Habitat is not the main actor, but rather they have a facilitator role to bring different sectors in Turkey together.

Habitat first started working under Agenda 21 Decisions Implementation which aims to empower young people in decision making processes. Later in 2011, the association was restructured and changed its name to Habitat Centre for Development and Governance which involves social groups like children, women and disabled people in addition to young people. In this respect, they continue to implement projects to enhance these groups' capacity in local and national decision-making processes. They also work with other NGOs, high schools and student clubs in universities which makes their works more inclusive.

The National Youth Parliament (Ulusal Gençlik Parlamentosu - UGP), which Habitat is also a part of, was established with participation of youth assemblies from cities all around Turkey. It is a unique body in which young people from youth assemblies from all around the country get together, carry out projects, campaigns and take part in the legislative processes such as the Local Government Act reform, the City Council Regulation and the Joint Intelligence Platform for Youth. This body enables young people to participate in nation-wide politics.

The participants defined National Youth Assembly as an umbrella bringing youth organizations and youth assemblies together. They mentioned two successful campaigns which are *Seçilmek İstiyorum* (I want to be elected) and *Her Meclise Bir Genç* (One Young Person to All Assemblies). In *Seçilmek İstiyorum*, they aimed to reduce the age to be elected to 25, and the law passed in the parliament in 2006, before the general elections in Turkey in 2007. On the other hand, *Her Meclise Bir Genç* campaign was

⁵⁷ This is a project in which young professionals in information technology gives peer trainings on use of computer and information technology to those who do not know about them and are willing to get more equipped on the subject. They give trainings in local associations, municipalities or technical high schools in different levels depending on the background of the group.

held in 2008 which aims to establish *Youth Assemblies* in all cities in Turkey. At the moment, there are 129 youth assemblies in local level. These two campaigns show how successful they are in influencing nation-wide politics.

How the participants in Habitat focus group started their involvement in the NGOS differs from those in political parties. However, surprisingly, one third of the participants came to Habitat with their family members' encouragement. Two of the participants' mothers were the members of local *Women's Assemblies* where they met Habitat and they introduced their children to Habitat. Even though one of them first came to Habitat with her mother's influence, she later actively started working in Habitat when she was appointed to there for her UNDP internship. For others, they all met Habitat either while they were working in Youth Assemblies in their cities or in university. Here, it is visible how influential Habitat is in *Youth Assemblies* in the establishment of which Habitat was one of the main actors. On the other hand, either through student clubs or courses on civil society or NGO governance, Habitat is among those at the top of the list worth to mention when it comes to youth NGOs in Turkey. At last, but not least, one of the participants stated that he is in Habitat for his further career plans. He aims to work within the UN in the future; hence he believes that working in Habitat will help him gain the crucial experience to be eligible for a position in the UN.

Both in the office and in their projects in other cities, they have an informal environment. This informality is what attracts them to pursue their active involvement in Habitat even though their internship period finishes:

- *Since we don't have a formal relationship, when you come here, you inevitably become friends with other people here. Because, our office has a comfortable environment, you also saw it. That's why, people get attached. It is comfortable and that must be the reason why there are so many volunteers.*⁵⁸

⁵⁸Resmi bir ilişkimiz olmadığı için, buraya geldiğinde burada çalışan kişilerle arkadaş oluyorsun ister istemez. Çünkü ofisimizin çok rahat bir ortamı var, sen de gördün. O yüzden insanlar bağlanıyor. Hani şey rahat davranıyor o yüzden herhalde bu kadar çok gönüllüsü var.

Since all of their projects involve young people, they are able to make friends from different parts of Turkey. This opportunity helps the young people to know different cultures in the country. Thinking about the highly polarized political environment in Turkey, Habitat with its projects and trainings facilitate the communication between young people with different backgrounds. Especially National Youth Parliament gets young people together and as they get to know each other and build friendships, they get the ability to get over the prejudices produced by families, media and political environment they are in:

- ...Exactly, for example there are Kurds or Laz people. There are people from very different places and actually suddenly you see that you become friends with that person and that Kurd is not an “other” anymore; because you don’t marginalize them anymore after you become friends, don’t see them like that anymore...⁵⁹

Despite the public policies they are part of, this informalization process is what they are proud of. All of the participants had individual stories relating to this aspect. Seen in this light, as the polarized parties get to know each other, their approach to the social and political issues evolve and as young people, they become actors with power to change the conflictive situation. This opportunity to make friends from different parts of the country also helps them improve their networks and bring them future opportunities for further projects to be held with other young people.

In order to have inputs by young people in the constitution-making process, they held a workshop on young people’s requests about the new constitution in March 2012. They organized *National Youth Meeting*⁶⁰ together with TEPAV where young people from civil society and youth assemblies got together to discuss on their expectations

⁵⁹...Aynen, mesela orada işte Kürt de var, ne bileyim Laz da var. İşte çok farklı kesimden insanlar var ve hani hakikatten bir bakıyorsun onunla arkadaş olmuşsun ve ne bileyim o Kürt artık bir öteki değil, çünkü sen zaten onunla bir arkadaşlık olunca onu artık ötekileştirmiyorsun, öyle görmüyorsun yani...

⁶⁰For more information see also:

<http://www.habitatkalkinma.org/tr/haberler/s/93/Anayasa+Ulusal+Genclik+Toplantisi+25+Mart+2012+Samsun>

from the new constitution and write a proposal for their demands from it. Different from all other workshops on constitution, not necessarily targeting only young people, this one was the only nation-wide workshop for proposals. This unique project had the lowest average age among all other workshops held in Turkey. At the end of the meeting, they had a report to submit to the National Grand Assembly of Turkey as a concrete output.

In this light, Habitat as an NGO focusing on young people aims to be influential on the new constitution which will guarantee the rights of youth in Turkey. The participants stressed the importance of this as they believe that if young people in Turkey have constitutional rights, they will have more power and influence in decision-making processes.

They also stated that the current constitution which was written in 1982 under the military rule, does not represent the young people nor enable them to be actors in political processes as it defines young people from a restrictive perspective:

- *The definition of youth arises from a restriction. Actually, they address young people through something they ought not to do. Whereas, it doesn't say anything about how it should be, how they bring themselves into beings. One restriction, bad habits, protection. Do you understand? It is something through a restriction and protection. Actually, it is very far from representation. That's why, I think, the discussions on the constitution are valuable. A supportive constitution, not a protective one.*⁶¹

They aim to be influential in the constitution writing process as they submit the report of this national meeting, and at the end, young people may have their constitutional rights which will eventually enable them to be involved in decision-making processes more than they used to be.

⁶¹Bir yasak üzerinden tanımlama yapılıyor gençlere. Aslında yapmaması gereken şey üzerinden bir şey yazıyor. Halbuki, nasıl olsun, kendini nasıl var etsin üzerinden bir şey söylenmiyor. Hani bir yasak, kötü alışkanlıklar, korumak yani. Anladın mı yani, bir yasaklama ve koruma üzerinden yapılan bir şey yani. Burada aslında bir temsilden çok uzakta bir şey. O yüzden bu anayasa tartışmaları kıymetli bence. Koruyucudeğildestekleyicianayasa.

Some of the participants used to work in political parties' youth branches, those of CHP and BDP, but none of them supports a political party today. They all believe that youth branches only assist the political party, and they are not an independent body where young people can propose anything concerning youth policies. In this respects, they refer them to be the objects, but the subjects.

However, they also believe that party membership brings more effectiveness and influence in politics:

- *I am aware that I should have power or belong to a particular social group in order to influence something and work in the political arena.*⁶²

For the reasons mentioned above, some of the participants are planning to be a member of a political party in the future. This is a very interesting point in a sense that as an active members of Habitat, an NGO working on youth enhancement and has achieved significant success, they are still not satisfied with their influence in public policies. Hence, they see more power to influence politics in party membership. This is a result of the dominant perception in Turkey, which accepts party politics as the only political arena.

On the other hand, other participants equated party membership with partisanship and fanaticism, which makes them feel *disgusted* by party politics. From their point of view, the political parties carry out dirty politics which is consisted of manipulation and interest-based approach. In addition to this, they also criticized the age range in the political parties' youth branches, which sometimes goes up to above 30. They are concerned that people close to their 30s should not represent young people in youth branches. That's why; they believe that those people seek more for their own interests rather than aiming to represent the young people in political parties.

They make a distinction between political parties and the NGOs in two aspects: first, the political parties make propagandas as the NGOs focus on awareness building;

⁶² Bir şeylere etki etmek gerekiyorsa ve siyasal alanda çalışabilmem gerekiyorsa belirli bir güce ya da belirli bir sosyal gruba da mensup olmam gerektiğinin farkındayım.

and second in the political parties a young person exist as a member of the party, while in the NGOs young people are able to be themselves as independent individuals.

At the end of the discussion on political parties, all participants agreed upon the fact that in both venues young people are involved in politics for pragmatic purposes. They seek social status and reputation in political parties, while they seek for self-satisfaction in the NGOs.

Even though Habitat works with local authorities, hence the political parties in local projects, they never have direct connections and cooperation with any political party in Turkey. Instead, they have indirect relationship either as a facilitator in multiparty projects where different sectors come together or as a main party in local projects.

Participants believe that if they have a direct relationship with any of the political parties, differences in ideologies and political standpoints may affect the outcome of their projects with other ones:

- *We work with the municipality of Diyarbakır in Diyarbakır, other than that in Yozgat, in Ümraniye we work with AKP municipality. Not an organic relationship, but we establish a partnership. To influence the public opinion, we work with the government, but it is not like adopting their opinions, but partnerships for public interest.⁶³*

As discussed above, Habitat aims to be neutral by only establishing partnerships with political parties or the government. Therefore, they strictly avoid being involved with any of the political parties. They aim to *touch* all groups, but not be one of them.

The participants defined this situation as the primary foundation of an NGO. They referred to the name NGO – non-governmental organization and stated that their work should be beyond governments:

⁶³ Diyarbakır'da Diyarbakır Belediyesi ile çalışıyoruz, onun dışında yani bütün Yozgat'ta, işte Ümraniye'de şöyle çalışıyoruz mesela Ak Parti belediyesiyle çalışıyoruz. Organik bir bağ değil de, ortaklık kuruyoruz mesela. Bu kamuoyu etkileme konusunda hükümetle çalışıyoruz ama birebir onların görüşünü benimseme tarzında değil sadece yani kamunun yararına bir ortaklıklar.

- *In English it is NGO, non-governmental organization. Actually, it's beyond government. If the government changed today, Habitat would continue in the same way. I don't know if this is being objective, or handling them tactfully... But, there is this aspect, doing right-oriented things, without any political attitude.*⁶⁴

As discussed above, they distinguish themselves from mainstream politics and define their activities as rights-oriented. At this point, the participants further discussed their *apolitic* attitude:

- *I have these questions in my mind. Does being this much impolitic create another political attitude in itself? Not being politic is politic at some point. When you try to touch everyone, but are not one of them...*⁶⁵

This discussion revealed the obstacles this attitude created before them. The participants reflected their concerns about the students in prison due to their protest their protest demanding free education, accused to be involved in terrorist activities, which is a big criticism towards the government as they are accused to use their power to oppress the opposition groups with such accusations.

Since it is a political standpoint for both sides of the issue, Habitat chooses not to take a position in it. But, some of the participants expressed their concerns as they consider these students as a disadvantageous group and their belief that as an NGO working for disadvantageous groups, Habitat should do something for them. But, they also added that this dilemma is valid for all NGOs, not only for Habitat in particular as they aim to be neutral but this neutrality sometimes take them to the position of being insensitive to such sensitive issues.

⁶⁴ Yani İngilizce NGO non-governmental. Aslında hükümet üstü bir şey tam anlamıyla. Şimdi başka bir hükümet gelse Habitat aynı şekilde devam eder. Ya bunun adı objektif olmak mı, bilmiyorum hani, nabza göre şerbet vermek mi... Ama yani şey kısmı var, hükümet üstü, hiçbir politik tutum belirtmeden hak odaklı bir şey yapmak.

⁶⁵ Kafamda şöyle soru işaretleri oluşuyor. Bu kadar politik olmamak da aslında kendi içinde başka bir politik tutumu yaratıyor mu? Yani politik olmamak da politik bir seçim bir yerde. Herkese dokunmaya çalışıp hiçbirinden olmadığın sürece de...

The discussion above brought out the topic of the students who are in prison due to their protest to demand free education in Turkey. Again in this topic as well, Habitat prefers not be involved in the issue either, since it has become political as well. But, young people in National Youth Parliament also demand free education and they state it in their reports that are submitted to the Grand National Assembly. Here, one of the participants said that everybody in National Youth parliament would agree with those young people who in prison today, but in the name of neutrality, they cannot take a position in this issue:

-A placard, here I think, all youth assemblies would object this, they would say there can't be a punishment like this. But still, we won't do anything about this. We shouldn't touch...⁶⁶

Other participants disagreed with this statement as they believe it is not a problem of particularly young people, but it is a problem of freedom of speech and fundamental rights in Turkey in general. Furthermore, they stated that this example shows it very well that Habitat never discusses anything through issues, but through concepts. In other words, they demand free education, but they do not discuss the right of citizens to access free education through the students in prison due to their protest activities demanding free education.

At last, the participants discussed their own organization in terms of their own effectiveness. As young people working in a youth NGO either as volunteers/interns or professional project managers, they are completely independent in expressing themselves and in their project design. Some of the participants shared their experiences where their proposals for a project were accepted and implemented even though they had been a part of Habitat for few months as volunteers. These examples and their independency seem to make them feel confident in taking responsibilities in their projects with young people outside their office.

⁶⁶ Bir pankart, burada bence bütün gençlik meclisleri buna karşı çıkacaklardır, böyle bir ceza olmaz diyeceklerdir. Ama biz yine de bununla ilgili bir şey yapmayacağız. Dokunmamamız gerekiyor...

On the other hand, all of the participants complained from the lack of the sense of responsibility and awareness of volunteer work among young people in Turkey. They believe as young people do not put enough effort in the volunteer work most of the time; this reduces the efficiency of their work. Even though the high level of circulation of volunteers causes inefficiency, they still value their presence as they gain awareness even during their limited time in Habitat.

To sum up, the participants in Habitat focus group study have had very good contributions to the discussions. They seem to be more aware of the environment they are a part of as they are the main actors as young people working in a youth NGO. On the other hand, with their projects such as workshops on constitution writing and National Youth Assembly, they have a better overlook on youth policies in Turkey compared to those in political parties, since they focus more on more ideological discussions of political parties.

4.4 LambdaIstanbul

Lambda focus group study also witnessed an intense discussion with elaborate views on why they have chosen to be politically active in an NGO, particularly Lambda. A total of four participants, aged between twenty three and thirty participated in the group. Like the participants in BDP focus group, Lambda group also focused on politics of a relatively marginalized group in society: LGBTTT. They also focused on subjects like what being political means, their motivations for venue selection for political participation, hot issues in politics in Turkey and constitution-writing process. Nevertheless, their discussion reveals insights on the venue selection of youth in LGBTTT movement in Turkey.

Two of the participants are university students, one undergraduate and one graduate, another one is a post-doc research fellow in a university in Istanbul and the last one works in private sector.

When asked, they defined their activities within Lambda as providing a space for LGBTTTs to socialize and share their experiences. They also provide both legal and psychological support to LGBTTTs if needed. *Danışma Hattı* is one of their main works,

which is a hot line which LGBTTs are able to consult anything in scheduled times. In addition, they organize parties for socialization purposes, film-screening and discussion sessions, they maintain the office work and every year they organize the Pride Week in Istanbul, Turkey.

The Pride Week as their biggest organization that deserves attention. Throughout one week, they organize workshops, film-screenings and seminars on LGBTTs, and at the end of the week thousands of people gather for the Pride Walk, the participants of which has gradually increased in recent years. In the Pride Week, LGBTT people have the opportunity to socialize, learn from each others' experiences, attend discussion sessions and draw attention to LGBTT rights in a country where they suffer from both legal and social discrimination.

After one participant discovered his gender identity during his teen ages and came out to his family, he chose Lambda because it was the only LGBTT organization in Istanbul where he lived. Even though he has been involved in other LGBTT organizations established in later years, he says that Lambda always has a priority for him since he has emotional ties with the organization. For his involvement in Lambda, the organization's structure and its uniqueness was the main reason.

Another participant used to be a part of LGBTT student club in his university, but had never come to Lambda. Even though he was a student in Istanbul, the location of Lambda office was far away from his living space, hence he failed to be an active member of the organization. After he completed his PhD degree abroad, he moved back to Turkey and wanted to work actively in LGBTT organizations, and has chosen Lambda because it was the most popular LGBTT organization in Istanbul.

The third participant first met Lambda during the Pride Week few years ago when she came to visit a friend in one of the workshops. This was followed by her self-realization of her gender identity. She thinks that Lambda is a place where she can be herself and decided to get responsibilities in Lambda in party organizations and office works.

The fourth participant, started going to Amargi, a feminist organization in Istanbul after she took a course on gender in university. Later, she started attending events

organized by Lambda and like another participant; this was followed by her self-realization of her gender identity. Since then, she actively works in the office and *Danışma Hattı*.

All of the participants define Lambda as a place where people with different backgrounds come together and where they can breathe. They feel very comfortable in every sense and this is basically what makes them stay in Lambda. There have been occasions when some members of Lambda establish different LGBTTT organizations, but the participants in the focus group study want to stay in Lambda even though they also participate in the activities of those organizations. This is mainly because of their friendships and emotional ties they have in/with Lambda.

Even though Lambda is an organization founded for the enhancement of LGBTTT rights, the participants pointed out that they do not focus solely on LGBTTTs, but also issues like anti-militarism, feminism, ethnicity, capitalism, discrimination and the rights of disadvantaged groups. LGBTTTs' identity politics was just a starting point for the organization, but today there are many different topics they focus on as mentioned above. This is another thing that attracts them in Lambda and they say this diversity of members in Lambda has widened their perspectives in their lives.

When it comes to the structure of the organization, Lambda does not have a hierarchal structure. All of the participants mentioned the constant change of people in the organization, and defined the instability it causes as one of the characteristics of their organization. As a legal association, Lambda has an administrative body, but the participants reflected that it is only because of the legal structure that they ought to have people in such bodies. But in practice, there is no core-group, nor rigid structure in decision-making processes within the organization. At the same time, they are aware of the fact that some older members think that new-comers should have less power in decision-making, but in the group dynamic they succeed to keep this influence at minimum:

- *Like those who work more have more power. Like, the new comers are not listened to a lot... These things inevitably happen and I don't think*

*we are free of any of these. At least, we try not to establish it this way as much as possible.*⁶⁷

- *But, I think our difference is that we can talk about these. Those things that are ignored in other organizations are here at least.*⁶⁸

The participants also discussed the problems within the organization arising from individual ones, but they believe that what makes Lambda different is that they can talk about their problems comfortably. The other organizations they had been involved before had more rigid structures where the members could hardly criticize any decision and the new-comers had difficulties to be a part of decision-making processes.

Their experiences with other organizations, where they are categorized according to their gender orientation by the members of them, discourage them in terms of being involved in those organizations:

- *When I first started political activities there were feminist women around me, and somehow I felt very comfortable, I felt very strong. I told that I was trans, and they let me in their events... But, as I met different feminist organizations, I discovered these things are very questionable. Me, being feminist and trans, having a male body, being advantageous; all became questionable... It still continues. They are still not resolved. When we get out of Lambda and look as LGBT feminist movement, we still face such things.*⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Daha çok iş yapanlar daha çok söz hakkına sahip olur. İşte yeni gelenin sözü dinlenmez falan filan. Hani bunlar ister istemez çok kaçınılmaz olan şeyler, ve hani ben bizim de bunlardan çok azade olmadığımızı düşünüyorum bir yandan. Olabildiğince bir şekilde bunu böyle kurmamaya çalışıyoruz, en azından...

⁶⁸ Ama işte bence farkımız tam da hani bunları oturup konuşabiliyor olmamız. Diğer örgütlerde sanki hiç yokmuş gibi davranılan o şeyler en azından burada.

⁶⁹ Ben böyle hani ilk örgütlenmeye başladığım zaman etrafımda feminist kadınlar vardı ve bir şekilde böyle kendimi çok rahat hissetmişim, çok güçlü hissetmişim. Transim demişim, onlar da tamam gel eyvallah bizim etkinliklerimize katıl falan... Ama böyle farklı feminist örgütlenmelerle karşılaştığımda hani bunların çok sorgulanabilir şeyler olduğunu keşfettim. Benim feministliğim de translığım da erkek bedenine sahip olduğum avantajlı olduğum şeyler de tartışılabilir şeyler olmuştu... Hala devam ediyor, hala

- *When I moved back, I was thinking of being active in feminist organizations, but now I have completely given up that idea, I can't deal with them. I prefer to spend my energy on other places. That's why that's the reason I am actively working in Lambda.*⁷⁰

As discussed above, the participants have been exposed to discrimination in other NGOs focusing on the other disadvantageous groups, especially women. After such incidents, the participants engaged with Lambda even more, since they believe that in Lambda there is no categorization of any ideology, gender identity, ethnicity or class.

Similar to the participants in Habitat, the participants in Lambda focus group also defined the venue of political parties as opposing to the NGOs. They referred party politics as '*high politics*' which also reflects that they consider NGOs somewhere below the political parties in the ranking (if there is any) of institutions in political arena.

All of the participants, with no exception, expressed their unwillingness to be members of political parties. They believe that the political parties are not the organizations they are able to feel as comfortable as they do in Lambda. They also claimed that in party politics there is a different language used, which is not familiar to them at all. They find the discourse of the political parties boring and dull:

- *I don't feel myself close to that language at all. Other people's experiences I listened to scare me.*⁷¹
- *After all, I have never voted. I am such a person. I think, when there is a structure, a state, a group; when groups are formed someone is excluded and continued to be excluded and oppressed.*⁷²

çözölmüş şeyler değil. Lambdadan çıkıp böyle LGBT feminist hareket olarak baktığımızda, böyle karşılaşmalar yaşıyoruz.

⁷⁰ Ben döndüğüm zaman düşünüyordum feminist organizasyonlarda da etkin olabilmeyi ama kesinlikle artık ondan vazgeçtim, uğraşamayacağım onlarla. Ben enerjimi başka yerlere sarf etmeyi tercih ediyorum. O yüzden de yani Lambdada daha aktif olarak çalışmaya başlamamın sebebi budur.

⁷¹ O dile kendimi hiç yakın hissetmiyorum. Duyduğum deneyimlerden falan da böyle bir gözlerim ürperiyor.

In the light of the discussion above, Lambda members consider political parties as very structured institutions where the people involved in them have very limited space to express themselves, and eventually in which they ought to fit in certain norms according to the ideology of the party.

Furthermore, they think that people can make politics by transforming themselves, and due to their rigid structure the political parties are not likely to allow people to transform themselves:

- *I believe that people can make politics by transforming themselves. I try to create conditions and space for this or to be in such places. That's why, according to such mentality, the political parties are so rational and logical.*⁷³

However, Lambda as an organization focuses on socialization factor in their activities, and its members believe that socialization is the major aspect in LGBTTT movement:

- *And there is this thing; I believe that socialization is a very important aspect of LGBT movement. Political parties are not places to breathe, to feel comfortable, organize parties or to socialize.*⁷⁴

In their point of view, political parties leave no space for socialization; they are not ideal venues for their political activities. Instead, the political parties are serious, hierarchal and bureaucratic institutions with the absence of diversity:

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⁷²Zaten ben hayatımda hiç oy vermedim. Böyle bir insanım. Bir yapı olduğunda, bir devlet olduğunda, bir grup olduğunda, gruplaştığında her zmana birilerinin dışarıda kaldığını ve ezilmeye devam ettiğini, dışlanmaya devam ettiğini düşünüyorum.

⁷³İnsanların kendisini dönüştürerek bir şekilde politika yapabileceğine inanıyorum. Bunu yapmanın koşullarını ve alanlarını yaratmaya ya da oralarda bulunmaya gayret ediyorum. O yüzden de siyasi partiler bu tür bir kafa yapısı için çok rasyonel, çok mantıklı yerler.

⁷⁴Ve şöyle bir şey de var LGBT hareketinin çok önemli bir ayağının da sosyalleşmek olduğunu düşünüyorum. Siyasi partiler de çok nefes alınabilecek, rahatlanabilecek, parti düzenlenebilecek, sosyalleşilebilecek yerler değil bence.

- *Why don't I join political parties? At first, probably because of this hierarchal structure. I don't want to be in a place where orders are given from the top and we have to do them. Here, in Lambda we make the decisions for the things we will do. In a hierarchal environment, I don't think that new comers will have such a right to speak.*⁷⁵

Lambda members care more about the likeliness to have an influence to change people's daily lives and practices, which they think is possible for LGBTTs through their organization:

- *The reason I prefer Lambda over this is that instead of having such a hierarchy and effort to integrate in the system, Lambda directly serves LGBT individuals. It deals with daily issues, with the aim to make people's lives better, reducing the violence and it allows people to have self-confidence, to be in a place where they feel comfortable. It provides these...*⁷⁶

However, as in the example of *Danışma Hattı*, the participants mention the satisfaction they get from helping LGBTTs with any kind of problems they can have in their daily lives. Since LGBTTs have difficulties in their social lives in Turkey, Lambda members' primary aim is to change LGBTTs' daily lives positively rather than seeking for their constitutional rights:

- *And there is Danışma Hattı; many people can find answers for question they can't ask anywhere else. In this respect, in terms of making people's lives*

⁷⁵Siyasi partilere neden katılmıyorum? Birincisi bu hiyerarşik yapılanmadan dolayı herhalde. Emirlerin yukarıdan verildiği ve bunları yapmak zorunda olduğumuz bir ortamda bulunmak istemiyorum fazla. Burada Lambda da yapacağımız şeylerin kararlarını da kendimiz alıyoruz. Hiyerarşik bir ortamda, özellikle yeni gelenlerin öyle bir söz hakkı olabileceğini hiç düşünmüyorum.

⁷⁶Lambdayı buna tercih etmemin bir diğer sebebi de bu hiyerarşiyle ve var olan düzene kendini eklemeye çabalarının yerine direk olarak Lambda'nın LGBT bireylere hizmet veriyor olması. Günlük yaşamla ilgili şeylerle uğraşılıyor olması, insanların günlük yaşamlarını belki daha iyileştirme amaçlı olması, şiddetin azaltılması falan, insanın kendisiyle barışık olması ve işte kendini rahat hissedebileceği ortamlarda bulunabilmesi, bunlara olanak sağlanması...

*easier, it is more influential. Of course, the issue of changing laws is not one of the priory things we deal with at the moment.*⁷⁷

Seen in this light, different from all other institutions in this study, the participants in this group did not define *effectiveness* only in terms of law-making, instead they distinguish being effective in daily practices from legal aspect:

- *I think it can be as influential as a political party, but in terms of changing the laws, Lambda is not that influential. But, in terms of changing people's opinions and improving people's living conditions, people feel comfortable as they know there is such a place (Lambda).*⁷⁸

Lambda focus group has been the only one who did not evaluate NGOs outside political sphere, whereas the others have claimed that the only way to be effective in political life is through political parties. Nevertheless, as discussed before, they still see political parties as high politics.

This also depends on what they consider as political. The other groups referred politics generally as public policies, parliamentary works and ideological issues, while Lambda participants consider anything in life political:

- *Dressing up in the Pride Walk, for example they criticize as we wore revealing clothes. I believe that, today walking around with revealing clothes is political. Like drinking alcohol where the tables in Taksim are removed,*

⁷⁷ Ve işte danışma hattının bulunması birçok insanın başka yerde sormadıkları sorulara cevap bulabilmeleri falan. Bu açıdan insanların gündelik hayatlarını iyileştirmek açısından çok daha etkili. Tabi ama yasaları değiştirmek gibi bir konu, zaten çok da fazla direk bir Lambda olarak birinci hedefimiz o değil aslında uğraştığımız şey olarak.

⁷⁸Bir siyasi parti kadar etkin olabilir bence ama yasa değiştirme açısından belki o kadar etkin değil. Ama insanların fikrini değiştirmek açısından ve insanların yaşam koşullarını değiştirmek iyileştirmek açısından en azından böyle bir yerin olduğunu bilmeleri bile insanları rahatlatıyor bazen

when it is not allowed to drink in Galata, I think drinking alcohol is political. Where all these happen, I think politics can be made in this way.⁷⁹

- *I also think that everything we do here is political. That's why I don't see this very bureaucratic and official like a political party. It should also exist, but where I stand is not such a place. Also, with a serious attitude, always at the desk... I don't know, maybe they are not like this all the time but it seems to me like that all the time. For me, my priority is to come here to talk on people's confusions and feelings on Danışma Hattı. But constitution etc is important, too. But, the people who work on it give trust to me.⁸⁰*

From this point of view, they do not abstract Lambda as an NGO and their work from political arena. They all claim that they prefer a form of organization that can directly affect/change people's lives, rather than those deal with legal issues.

They all present their appreciation to those who work in high politics and on legal issues concerning LGBTTs. Even though, they organize some campaigns targeting LGBTTs' rights in the new constitution, such as submitting proposals for new constitution and sending postcards to the MPs to create awareness for LGBTT rights in the parliament, they mainly focus on social life of LGBTTs. When asked to name a political party they would prefer to be a member if they would ever be, they all replied as BDP:

⁷⁹Onur yürüyüşünde kostüm giymek, mesela açık giyindiniz falan filan diye eleştiriyorlar. Ben tam da şu devirde gerçekten açık giyinip yürümenin de politik bir şey olduğunu düşünüyorum. İçki içmenin de işte bütün o İstiklal'deki masalar kaldırılmışken, Galata'da içki içmek yasaklanmışken, , içki içmenin de çok politik bir şey olduğunu düşünüyorum. Tüm bunlar varken bu halde politika yapılabileceğini düşünüyorum.

⁸⁰ Ben de burada yaptığımız her şeyin politik olduğunu düşünüyorum. O yüzden hani, bir parti gibi, bunu çok bürokratik çok resmi gibi görmüyorum. Onun da olması gerekiyor ama benim durduğum yer, öyle bir yer değil. Bir de yani ciddi bir ifadeyle, hep masa başında... bilmiyorum, hep öyle degillerdir belki ama bana öyle bir şey gibi geliyor. Benim için buraya gelip, danışma hattında insanların kararsızım, bilmiyorum, yanlış mı şunları şunları hissediyorum demesi üzerine konuşmak benim şu an önceliğim mesela. Ama işte anayasadır falan bunlar da önemli. Ama yapan birilerinin olması güven veriyor bana.

- *For that reason I respect people who struggle for this, I try to support them as much as I can, but if there is a political party I feel myself close to, it can be BDP.⁸¹*

BDP, as a political party focusing on Kurdish people's rights, also supports Lambda in their activities, protests and every year MPs from BDP attend Pride Walk in Istanbul. Another political party in Turkey they cooperate with is CHP, where MPs from CHP attended some activities during Pride Week.

Moreover, the statements of these young people regarding the differences between political parties and NGOs show that they relate the political parties with governance, while they relate NGOs with social transition. Seen in this light, the political parties have nothing to do with social transition, nor the NGOs with governance.

At the end of the discussion they make a clear statement that they distinguish Lambda from other NGOs. They make this differentiation because they all believe that most of the NGOs in Turkey today are integrated in the system that is dominated by the political parties. On the contrary, in Lambda they aim to build awareness about LGBTTs in society and their liberation. At some point, some participants even stated that they do not consider Lambda as an institution:

- *Here, many people say different things. It's weird for me even to call Lambda an organization. Everything here is so anti-institutional, and this is what I like, the reason for me to stay here.⁸²*

They make this conclusion because Lambda does not function in a traditional way like other institutions do. At the same time, they argue that their independency comes from their financial resources. Their only financial resource is the donations they

⁸¹O yüzden bunu yapan bu konuda mücadele eden insanlara gerçekten saygı duyuyorum, olabildiğince desteklemeye çalışıyorum ama yani işte politik olarak kendimi daha yakın hissettiğim bir parti varsa BDP olabilir.

⁸²Buradaki birçok insan çok farklı şeyler söyler. Yani Lambdaya bir kurum demek bile bana çok acayip geliyor. Buradaki işler o kadar anti kurumsal bir halde yürüyor ki, zaten benim hoşuma giden de bu, bulunma sebebim de bu.

receive. They reject to receive funds from any government or institution for their projects as they believe that it will put them in a position on the side of that fundraiser.

Overall, the participants in Lambda focus group focused on the form of their organization which provides them the ideal place to express themselves. According to them, the socialization aspect is the most important one in LGBTTT movement as it can change people's daily lives directly. Similar to all other focus groups in this study, they also consider political parties in a different position from NGOs in the political arena. Different from other groups, they do not necessarily claim that NGOs are not effective in policy making, since they perceive any action political. Lastly, they feel themselves closer to BDP among all other political parties, a political party that mainly focuses on another relatively marginalized group in society.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the determinants on the venue selection for youth political participation, in other words why young people choose to be involved in politics in either political parties' youth branches or NGOs.

The focus group interviews presented the motivations of young people to participate in politics, the influences on their participation, what different venues provide with them, and the differences and similarities between all these. Their motivations varied from their family or friends to their ambition to be more efficient in decision making processes. Moreover, their (non) involvement in constitution making process reflected the dimensions of their political activities.

Their experiences and observations in different institutions constituted the focus of the discussions, and their interpretations of and perspectives on current discussions on politics and constitution making process reflected the similarities and the differences between their political activities.

In this chapter, I aim to compare and contrast their motivations, perceptions, and attitudes towards each other through some themes arising from the focus group discussions.

5.1 The Actors in Political Life

Similar to previous studies on youth political participation in Turkey, the findings of this study present the fact that young people's perception of politics is limited to party politics. Not only young people in political parties' youth branches, but also young people in NGOs perceive politics where the only actors are political parties.

Surprisingly, NGO members in this study repeatedly mentioned the power of influence of political parties in political arena. This included their effectiveness in policy making and decision making processes. Even the participants from Habitat who have had significant success in making their campaigns a public policy, i.e. the campaign called *I Want to be Elected*, expressed their belief in political parties' power. Some of the participants in Habitat focus group reflected their willingness to be involved in political parties in the future as they believe that this will enable them to be more effective policy makers.

The participants in Lambda focus group referred the party politics as *high politics* which reflected their perception of the ranking of organizations in Turkey, in which NGOs come after political parties. Even though their primary concern is not policy making or influencing the decision making processes, similar to the participants in Habitat focus group, they do not perceive NGOs, of which they are members, as main political actors in political life.

In addition, not surprisingly, the participants from political parties have the same attitude towards NGOs. They perceive their organizations as the main actors through which they can make politics, and they see NGOs as supplementary organization.

Moreover, the participants in AKP focus group defined NGOs as organizations where they can socialize and get support for political parties. Their understanding of NGOs is limited to *townsmanship* organizations, and they did not even discuss any other NGO in Turkey.

Similar to a previous study⁸³ on youth in Turkey, this perception of young people in the focus group studies reflect the general attitude in Turkey in which the politics is limited to party politics.

Lastly, with this perception, there seems to be a lack of confidence among young people in NGOs in Turkey which makes them think that they are not influential in politics and decision making processes. Hence, they cannot realize the role they have in democratic systems. The discussion in Habitat focus group has perfectly indicated this situation as the participants perceive the political parties more influential, despite their success in turning their projects and campaigns into public policies. This situation creates a paradox and makes it more difficult to overcome this perception and possibly prevents NGOs from evolving to be main actors in the political life in Turkey.

5.2 NGOs vs. Political Parties

Even though young people in this study defined NGOs as less powerful to influence the processes in Turkey, their definitions were also based on *what political*

⁸³ Yentürk, Nurhan et al., 2008, İstanbul Gençliği: STK Üyeliği bir Fark Yaratıyor mu?, in Türkiye’de Gençlik Çalışması ve Politikaları, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul. p.342.

parties are not. In this respect, they compared political parties with NGOs in several aspects.

5.2.1 Diversity in Organization

One of the aspects where participants defined NGOs as opposite of political parties was about the diversity within the organization.

Except the participants in AKP study group, whose perception of NGOs is limited to townsman associations, all of the participants in other focus groups stated that the NGOs have more diversity among their members. In other words, NGOs embrace people with different backgrounds in the organization.

Especially the participants from NGOs defined their organizations as more democratic than political parties, where only people with certain ideology can be involved in. This democratic characteristic empowers young people that they can be influential in decision making processes within the organization. Even though participants in the focus groups with political parties state that they, as youth branches, are independent from the party organization, their activities do not differ from the party's general activities. In addition, the participants from the NGOs perceive them as implementers of general party agenda.

5.2.2 Language of Politics

According to NGO members, political parties have a different language which is more bureaucratic and complex for young people to understand. This language makes it difficult for young people in NGOs to *communicate* with political parties. In this respect, they believe that their peers in political parties try to integrate themselves into that system. After they become a part of the world of political parties, they replicate what party members in higher positions do and they do not work on youth policies indeed.

On the contrary, the participants in focus groups with NGOs stress the informalization in their organization. Young people from both Habitat and Lambda emphasize the informal relations and working environment in their organizations, which make those organizations attractive for themselves and other young people.

Moreover, young people define the language in party politics also as aggressive and violent. They believe that politicians or people in political parties use an aggressive language towards those who are not in the same political line with them. This is another reason that keeps young people in NGOs away from political parties.

5.3 Cooperation between Political Parties and NGOs

Even though young people in different organizations claim that they are different from each other, some of them occasionally work together. They either attend in activities or work on projects together.

In focus group studies, NGO members gave the examples of the projects or activities where they work with political parties together. Even though Habitat does not cooperate with any of the political parties directly, but build partnership with them, Lambda members have hosted few MPs in their seminars. Especially during the Pride Week in the previous year, MPs from BDP and CHP participated in their workshops.

In this respect, the cooperation between certain NGOs and political parties is related to their ideology and standpoint in politics. For example, MPs from BDP, a party which supports relatively marginalized groups, support the activities of another organization from the same part of the political spectrum.

On the other hand, it should be mentioned that their cooperation still remains poor for a democratic system. Young people in the NGOs and political parties work in different levels and follow different tasks. Despite the differences in the forms of their organizations, their perceptions also make it difficult for them to cooperate with each other.

5.4 Youth Political Participation and Constitution Making Process in Turkey

As it is discussed in the literature, in the scope of this study, I look at the constitution-making process as a negotiation process between different interest groups in society. In addition, there is a direct link between constitution-making process and political participation.

The constitutions specify the foundations of the institution within a political system, as well as the functioning of those institutions. Moreover, they regulate the

forms and limits of political participation. They are the primary references to look at in order to understand the limits of political participation.

Recently, there is an ongoing constitution-making process in Turkey which aims to produce the first civic constitution. With this significance, different groups have their suggestions and contributions regarding their demands from the new constitution.

In the scope of this study, I aimed to look at what young people both in political parties and NGOs do in terms of involving the constitution-making process in order to compare and contrast different institutions' involvements in this negotiation process.

Among all participants in focus group discussions, the participants from Habitat focus group were the most interested in this process. They have held a workshop, especially in cooperation with National Youth Parliament which has brought hundreds of young people from all around the country and prepared a text to be submitted to the related commission in the parliament.

In addition to their activities, the participants in Habitat focus group have provided most elaborative discussions on the constitutional rights of young people in Turkey, especially regarding youth political participation.

On the other extreme, the participants in AKP focus group were the least interested in this process. According to them, it is a job to be done by the members of the parliament, but young people. Nonetheless, they stated that they would do their best if they are asked to do something by the party organization.

Similar to AKP focus group, the participants in BDP focus group have not been involved in any workshop or meeting on drafting the new constitution. They also reflected their reliance on the party organization and the members of parliament from their party. However, they emphasized their mistrust in this process as they believe that the ruling party does not consider the proposal from opposition groups and they have the majority in the parliament that enables them to pass the laws suiting their interests. This mistrust seemed to be the main reason of the lack of interest among the participants in BDP focus group.

Lastly, Lambda presented their proposals via another LGBTTT organization to the parliament, but they were not directly involved in the process. But they actively

participated in protests against the dismissal of LGBTTT organizations from the list of organizations which the president of parliament thanked publicly. Their protest consisted of sending letters and postcards massively to the president of the parliament in order to remind their contribution to the process. At last, the parliament apologized for the mistake and thanked LGBTTT organizations for their contributions as well. However, apart from this, the participants of Lambda focus group reflected that they do not aim to be involved because they also believe that their demands would be ignored and they are more interested in socializing aspect of the LGBTTT movement.

To sum up, young people in this study are not involved in the constitution-making process as much as other activities. The participants from Habitat had the interest in this process, whereas the AKP group reflected a lack of interest. However, the participants from BDP and Lambda explained their non-involvement as their mistrust for the current political situation in Turkey.

5.5 Micro-interlocutor Analysis of Focus Group Data

The new approach Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) presented for focus group data is called micro-interlocutor analysis. This analysis provides “*meticulous information about which participant responds to each question, the order in which each participant responds, response characteristics, the nonverbal communication used, and the like is collected, analyzed, and interpreted.*” (Onwuegbuzie et al, 2009: 1).

In addition to the constant-comparison content analysis and keywords-in-context analysis, in this section I will analyse the focus group data with micro-interlocutor method of analysis. Regarding the within group interaction, focus groups in this study varied from each other.

For example, in AKP focus group study, one of the participants dominated the all discussion, not only because he had such character, but all other participants who are his friends put him in the position of the spokesperson of the group. When they were asked to make more contributions to the group discussion by their friend, they all stated that he is the one who knows the party and activities best, though that participant didn't really agree with that statement.

It should also be noted that he was the one who got the rest of the group involved in the party organization. In this respect, he was perceived to have knowledge

and confidence to speak in the name of the group. Especially, the silence and unwillingness to join the discussion gave the impression that he was involved in the party because his friends were, and the peer pressure brought him to the party.

Such a situation existed in BDP focus group, too. The dominant participant was the one I personally met in party organization when I went there to find volunteers for my focus group study. Obviously, he had given basic information about my study in advance, so that the rest of the participants thought that he had known what to say better than they themselves do. Another reason for this could be his higher position in party's youth branch compared to the rest of the participants. But, it was very visible that all other participants paid attention to what he said and when they hesitated to join the discussion, they always wanted their friend to take the lead.

Compared to the focus group interviews conducted by political party members, both Habitat and Lambda focus group interviewees had much higher proportion of participation in overall discussion. In some occasions, they asked each other questions to raise a point or to get more comprehensive explanations from their friends. They were all very careful to leave enough time to speak for their friends in the interview and carefully listened to the other participants.

To sum up, with micro-interlocutor analysis, it is possible to draw a line between different forms of organizations. The most visible difference between NGOs and political parties comes up with this analysis. The participants from political parties sought for someone else to take the lead, whereas the participants from the NGOs equally contributed to the discussions. This difference can be linked with the hierarchal and the non-hierarchal structure of the organizations. As most of the participants in this study somehow mentioned, the hierarchal structure of the political parties require a leader, while the non-hierarchal and friendly environment in the NGOs bring about equal contribution of all participants.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

In this study, I aim to explore the determinants of the venue selection for youth political participation in Turkey, the motivations of young people to choose either political parties or NGOs.

In addition to this, I also looked at the youth involvement in constitution-making process in Turkey as the new constitution will draw the limits of political participation and hence youth political participation.

The research design consisted of focus group interviews as it will be the most suitable in order to collect data in a short period of time with in-depth insights. At first, as a non-random sampling technique in qualitative research methodology, I used purposive sampling and identified four groups of young people from different organizations in Turkey. Then, I contacted the participant by using snowball sampling technique.

Since the focus of my study is much specified, I involved most indicative groups in my purposive sampling and collected data with focus group interviews where I had a chance to observe group dynamics and the invaluable contributions of the participants, which I would not have been able to get with other qualitative research design, such as survey studies as they would limit the chances to gather such qualitative data due to the structured characteristic of that research design.

It should be noted that this study does not aim to be representative in any sense, as well as the purposive sampling design of the research design does not create a representative sample.

Despite such shortcomings, the focus group research design provided a less structured environment for participants to express themselves and share personal stories.

The findings show that it is not easy to draw a line between different forms of organizations young people are involved in. There are similarities between political parties and NGOs regarding their goals as a result of their political activities.

In this respect, this study also reflects the need for further and more comprehensive studies in order to understand different motivations and determinants of young people for political participation. Especially, it will be interesting to look at youth political participation in long term after new constitution comes into force or conduct a comparative study on the impacts of military and civic constitutions on youth political participation in Turkey.

Appendix I - Focus Group Interview Questions (Turkish)

- *(Opening)* Kendinizi tanıtır mısınız?
- *(Introduction)* Hangi siyasi partide/STK'da aktif olarak çalışıyorsunuz?
- *(Transition)* Genel olarak neler yapıyorsunuz? Ne gibi aktiviteleriniz var?
- *(Key)* Peki, özel olarak bu siyasi partiyi/STK'yı seçmenizin sebebi nedir?
- *(Key)* Burada çalışmaya nasıl başladınız?
- *(Key)* Kurumun tümünü düşündüğünde kendi aktivitelerini/katılımını nasıl görüyorsunuz? (Ne kadar katılım gösterebildiğini değerlendirebilmesi için)
- *(Transition)* Karar alma/değişim yaratma konusunda kendini yetkin ve etkin hissediyor musun?
- *(Key)* Günlük siyasette kendini ve aktif bir parçası olduğun kurumu nerede görüyorsunuz?
- *(Key)* Hiç siyasi partide/STK'da çalışmayı düşündün mü/denedin mi/ne gibi zorluklarla karşılaştın? (Siyasi partidekilere STK, STK'dakilere siyasi parti sormak üzere)
- *(Key)* Siyasete katılım şekli/etkinliği açısından siyasi parti ile NGO arasında bir fark görüyor musun?
- *(Key)* Siyasi parti / STK ile ortak çalıştığınız konular oluyor mu? (Evet ise, bu işbirliğini değerlendirir misin?)
- *(Key)* Çalıştığın partide/STK'da katılımını olumsuz etkileyecek ya da değiştirmek istediğin bir şeyler var mı? (Ya da şöyle olsaydı daha etkin ve yetkin olurdu dedğin)
- *(Key)* Yaptığınız etkinliklerde/projelerde önceden belirlenmiş (parti tarafından vs) adımları/politikaları mı takip ediyorsunuz, yoksa inisiyatif alıp gençler olarak kendiniz bir şeyler oluşturuyorsunuz?
- *(Key)* Kendi çalışmalarınız dahilinde anayasa yazım sürecinde aktiviteleriniz neler?
- *(Key)* Anayasa yazım sürecinde partinizi/STK'nızın yaptığı çalışmalar neler?
- *(Ending)* Bugünkü tartışmamızı değerlendirdiğinizde, gözden kaçırdığınızı düşündüğünüz ya da eklemek istediğiniz bir şey var mı?

Appendix II - Focus Group Interview Questions (English)

- *(Opening)* Please introduce yourself
- *(Introduction)* Which political party/NGO are you actively involved?
- *(Transition)* What do you do in these organizations in general? What kind of activities are you engaged in?
- *(Key)* What is your reason to be involve in this particular political party/NGO?
- *(Key)* How did you get involved?
- *(Key)* When you think about the institution as a whole, where do you see your activities/participation? (In order to enable the participant to evaluate her/his participation)
- *(Transition)* Do you feel active and competent in making decisions and changes (within the organization?)
- *(Key)* Where do you see the institution you are involved in and yourself in daily politics?
- *(Key)* Have you ever thought or tried to be involved in a political party/NGO? If yes, what kind of difficulties have you faced with? (To be asked as NGO for those in a political party and political party for those in an NGO)
- *(Key)* Do you see a difference between a political party and an NGO in terms of forms of political participation and activities?
- *(Key)* Do you ever work with political parties/NGOs? If yes, could you please evaluate this cooperation?
- *(Key)* Is there anything you would like to change within the organization you are involved in or you believe which affects your participation negatively? (Or is there anything you would be more active and competentin another way)
- *(Key)* In your activities, do you follow the tasks or politics given to you (by political party etc.) or create your own tasks by taking initiatives?
- *(Key)* Within your activities, what do you do during the constitution-writing process?
- *(Key)* What does your institution do for the constitution-writing process?
- *(Ending)* Looking at our discussion today, is there anything you think is ignored or you would like to add?

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