

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AS A DECISIVE ACTOR FOR DIRECTING POLICY IN TURKEY AND THE WESTERN BALKANS

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Abstract

At the present time, Turkey and the Western Balkan countries' policies at the economic and political arena have been re-shaped by internal and external dynamics. Which does not change is the policy-making process. In each country, the process takes place in the form of a cycle: policy-making, implementation and evaluation. Although different actors go into action at every stage of the process, there are some actors which mainly influence the stages of decision-making and agenda setting. The actor which would be examined within the framework of the study is the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The process of neo-liberal policies accepted these organizations as indispensable actors in the administration of the country, because the logic of minimal government attached importance to NGOs at the decision of policy-making process, believing that the tasks undertaken by the state must be realized by the market and the services can be provided effective and efficient in this context.

NGO's have also supported the state and public agencies to manage the country and have been decisive especially in directing economic and political relations in terms of neo-liberal policies or more generally the process of globalization. Especially in the 1990s, the reconciliation between state-market-society in general, and public sector-private sector-NGOs in particular were on the agenda by means of the idea according to which the problems of the government and public administration could be solved with the partnership of the state and the private sector. This partnership is "governance model" which expresses the new style of management and democracy mentality of the globalization process which implies that states are not a dominant power in the management individually. The perception according to which it would be possible to exert political power for development and for social resource management only through this model is being implemented. . It is claimed that policies are also produced in this context. With reference to this model, the idea of that NGOs must take on a greater role is highlighted by the World Bank and European Union in order to provide efficiency in the public sector, support competition and markets, create a favourable climate for private sector.

NGOs play an important role in disseminating the dominant power mode into the society. NGOs are effective at implementation, internalization and quicker adoption of existing and re-created

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policies by the society. Demands which are voiced by NGOs at the policy-making process are taken into account and discussed. These demands of NGOs sometimes can be primary elements at the policy-making process. And they can be successful to direct policy by using media which is another actor.

Within the scope of study, we first of all tried to explicit NGOs' position in the process of establishing a policy. Later on, in respect to that, the situation in Turkey and Western Balkan countries and their position within that process were discussed.

Keywords: Non-Governmental Organization, policy-making process, governance, policy actor, policy maker.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, in Turkey and Western Balkan countries, like the rest of the world, policies regarding their economic and political areas are being established in a constant policy cycle: raising a question, making a decision, implementing and evaluating. Also, certain actors are coming into play at the decision-making stage of process. These actors are not only state and government centric actors-bureaucrats, technocrats; political parties, electorates, private sector, non-governmental organizations, media, international establishments are also taking part in decision making and implementation process of public/government sector (Çevik and Demirci, 2008: 34-60). The policy actor to be reviewed within the scope of study is NGOs.

NGOs are non-profit entities independent from government which carry out lobbying activities in line with their economic, politic, social, cultural, judicial and environmental objectives, which recruit their members on the basis of volunteering, and which gain their income by grants and/or membership fees. In fact, it is briefly the general name used for organizations acting independently from government organization on private persons' own initiation and having a lawful presence.

NGOs started to gain importance in the last quarter of the last century in countries like Turkey, especially. The ground for gaining importance is integration into globalization process. Globalization concept, which denotes the world-wide spreading of values in economic, political and social areas and correspondingly methods and means by cutting across all boundaries, has become a reality impossible to ignore for all disciplines in the last thirty years. Within this period, especially in Western Balkans and Turkey, in developing countries, steps for involving in political and economic integration movement in Europe have been taken and a period in which mutual and/or shared responsibility and liabilities are undertaken has started. In this period, organizations which will follow the developments in Europe, provide information flow to countries and take part in policy process have been needed. Thereof, the period in which NGOs increase both qualitatively and quantitatively has been the period of neo-liberal policies.

This period is in fact indicating a period in which the “form” of the world system has also changed. By neo-liberal policymakers, it has been advocated that it is required for state to leave almost all kinds of its functions to the market and repeated at every occasion that the functions will be performed more effectively and efficiently by the market and capital-based NGOs are required to take significant roles especially in decision making processes and all these are also included in current documents. As an output of this viewpoint, globalization process has been successful in introducing governance model in the countries' agenda.

"Governance" term, which is indicating the relation between actors and organizations taking part in governing process, the participation of individual, group and organizations which do not have a formal attribution and the engagement of non-governmental organizations effectively in governing along with the bureaucratic structure, generates its own existence as a new political power model instead of governing mentality based on bureaucratic structure (Ergüzelöglü; 2003: 3). Rather than the sense of "State governs the society", the model is proposing also the participation of certain non-state organizations in country government on an equal basis (Bayramoğlu; 2002: 85): bureaucracy, state-private sector-nongovernmental organizations are equal in governing the country. From that point on, decision making mechanism is in this tripartite structure. This model is proposing that the governance of public activities should be carried out with the participation of private sector and NGOs at various governing levels and even if some certain activities are entirely assigned to those, accordingly, the bureaucracy is completely deactivated (Şahin; 2007: 28). What is anticipated is that the preponderating owner of decision making mechanisms in countries' governing their public policy process is changing into private sector and NGOs by which these are making their own presence felt. Thus, NGOs have immediately owned this model in terms of their own efficiencies. And in particular, many developing countries have drawn attention to the presence of these organizations and their active roles in this process within the scope of policy texts. Model has become a driving force in respect to the "development" of NGOs in these countries.

Governance model in developing countries such as Turkey and Western Balkans is considerably serving for the purpose of assuring the presence of capital and transnational companies. It is being used as a means in generating an economic and political system which is much more dependent on sovereign powers of the world system on the course of EU (Ergüzelöglü; 2003: 4). NGOs are also being brought into force to this means. Public policies are established not only by the decisions of bureaucracy that a single centre has determined, but also in consequence of decisions made by the participation of NGOs which keep the society within its own structure; in brief, with the image of "a more democratic policy" implementation and several organizations of the country are being reconfigured in line with the requirements for integration to the global process (Zabçı; 2000: 99-127).

2. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AS POLICY ACTOR IN TURKEY AND WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES

In general terms, NGOs in Turkey and Western Balkan Countries have made their presence as organizations which are economic, cultural, for knowledge acquisition and education, interest-oriented, formative and problem-oriented. Besides these, NGOs carrying out activities related to democratization directly; in other words, the ones related to interfering in order to change government structure in that country into a more democratic, more transparent, more liable structure; that is to say, in regard to changing the society are also present (Keyman; 2004: 12).

THE GENERAL VIEW OF NGOS IN TURKEY

According to the data of Associations Division of Ministry of Internal Affairs, as of October 2011, approximately 89.060 associations and 4585 foundations are actively functioning in Turkey. A single-partite legal structure assembling non-profit/voluntary organizations together does not exist in Turkey. Generally, structuring as association or foundation is in question (TACSO; 2011: 18-19).

In Turkey, the distribution of NGOs per regions is not at equal level. Particularly they have made presence in three metropolitans (the 20.14% of associations and 30.03% of foundations) in Istanbul, (the 9.51% of associations and 16.80% of foundations) in Ankara and (the 5.47% of associations and 4.47% of foundations) in Izmir. The presence of NGOs is quite weak especially in Eastern Anatolia, North-Eastern and Southern Anatolia regions (TACSO; 2011: 19).

Moreover, according to the data of Associations Division, apart from the national association and foundations in Turkey, 94 foreigner NGOs, of which the operation has been allowed since 1994, the legal structure is defined as association, foundation and non-profit organization and which are operating as branch and agency, are available.

The majority of NGOs in Turkey is playing a more active part in social services and solidarity. Their power of representation in the process of determining public policy and in the activities displayed for supporting a policy or an idea or for the purpose of discussing remains weak and/or insufficient. However, the case is just the contrary for certain NGOs. Also there are NGOs which prominently involve in the process of determining and making a policy. The most signification example of this is Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (*in Tr.* TÜSİAD), which is in the association status. TÜSİAD is an organization representing the big capital. It is an NGO which has aimed at contributing to the formation and development of a social order in which governance mentality, liberal economy and the institution and principles of competitive market economy are adopted. It mostly takes part in every phase of policy making process as an active and efficient actor. For instance, it has accomplished a significant policy ownership in respect to regional policies, by designing a sample geography book as supplementary textbook for high schools, in January 2001. It is highly important in respect to presenting the attitude and preparation of private sector which will practically involve in the process along with the

realization of agencies, while discussions on regional development agencies are proceeding precisely in the country's agenda. Here it has appeared as one of the most significant actors of policy process in this respect, by asserting regional development agencies as a means for forming regions that are competitive across the world, within the frame of liberal economy principles, as compatible with the objective of membership in the EU, as a policy (Kendir; 2005: 281-288). Similarly, as being in the status of association, Economic Development Foundation - EDF (*in Tr.* İKV) has a say in policy process, within the scope of ongoing studies on Turkey in this field, by means of a policy such as enabling the EU membership of Turkey, keeping the issue on the agenda all the time, providing early warning mechanisms, etc. In all studies with respect to be integrated into the EU, it plays a part as one of the primary actors. In cases where their own aims and objectives are not observed in the policy process, in the event of having a disagreement with the emissaries, it enables the emissaries change their opinions by assembling broad-based meetings in which the representatives of sector related to the issue have attended (Ergüzeloğlu; 2003: 1-19).

In an environment where such effective NGOs are also operating within the process of policy determining, a major part of NGOs is underperforming on influencing public policy and following the process in the background by centralizing the whole governing capacity in a single person.

Again, recently there have been also right-based NGOs which bring themselves into view by getting involved in policy-making process with the use of power and influence of social media. Initiatives such as "Put a Break on Racialism and Nationalism" (*in Tr.* Irkçılığa ve Milliyetçiliğe dur de) (33.597 facebook members), "Conscientious Objection Initiative" (*in Tr.* Vicdani Red Girişimi) (6.000 facebook members), Human Rights Joint Platform (*in Tr.* İnsan Hakları Ortak Platformu) and its electronic bulletin called as "İzlem" (*in Tr.* İzlem) (reaching more than 4000 people) are highly effective in setting human rights agenda. With the contributions of NGOs, this and all similar initiatives are raising awareness in public on the issues concerning human rights and democracy(TACSO; 2011:28).

Table I: The Status of NGOs in Turkey

Descriptive Features	Current State
Enabling Framework Law	Yes. Associations Law, Foundations Law.
Quick, easy, accessible Registration Process	Yes. A simple process taking no more than 30 days.
Public Benefit status defined by Law	Different definitions of public benefit apply to associations and foundations.
NGO's permitted to carry out economic activities	Yes. But NGO's are subject to the same tax on income as businesses.
Freedom to fundraise at home and abroad	Yes. But NGO's can only conduct public fundraising campaigns and face to face collection of private donations on gaining prior permission from local authorities.
National Agreement between State and NGO	No.

Reference: Bill Sterland&Galina Rizova, The Civil Society Environment in the Western Balkans and Turkey, A Needs Assessment Report Issued by TACSO, August 2010, p. 49.

The General View of NGOs in Western Balkan Countries ¹

Within the scope of Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations (TACSO) project, creating a database related to NGOs in Western Balkan countries has been tried. According to this, 455 NGOs in total are registered, as being in Albania (46), Bosnia-Herzegovina (61), Kosovo (38), Macedonia (109), Croatia (134), Serbia (134) and Montenegro (27). This figure implicates the organizations which have registered in the database. The areas of activity in which these function may generally be summarized as education/training-research, human rights, women's rights, environment, public policy, lobbying (interest representation), the youth and students.

The general structure of NGOs in these countries involves the groupings of citizens having various autonomy and voluntariness levels. Even though NGOs in these countries have the opportunities to access to the sources apart from the state, they are dependent on the state in terms of establishing an environment which will allow for their presence in general.

Western Balkan countries excluding Croatia, which became the 28th member of EU on the 1st July of 2013, have different positions concerning EU membership. Macedonia is about to start negotiations and as for the others, they are at prospect candidate country position. EU recognizes that NGOs make the formation of mechanism enabling their generating policy proposals relating

¹ Data in this section were prepared by summarizing "Civil Society Environment in Western Balkans and Turkey" by Bill Sterland & Galina Rizova, from A Needs Analysis Report made by TACSO.

to all areas of responsibility and extending out to society-wide possible and therefore, it regards the participation of civil society in decision-making process as a key element for an effective participative democracy. In this sense, the whole candidate countries is also obliged to establish participative democracy involving the process of "respecting and protecting the minorities along with the stability, supremacy of law and human rights in the institutions establishing democracy", in regard to their memberships. And so, the indispensable actor of participative democracy has been defined as NGOs.

In Turkey and Western Balkans, since the primary factor in the process of deciding on social and economic development policies is henceforth the global integration at the macro level and Europe integration at the micro level, the participation of NGOs in institutional reforms which are being developed in the EU partnership by states is in the key position in gaining a social benefit on a larger scale. In fundamental political papers regarding enlargement, statements such as "NGOs are able to play an important role in candidate or prospect candidate countries' transition to participative democracy in Europe as the supremacy of law has firmly established in democracy and governance implementations at all levels" and "Increasing the participation of NGOs in reforms realized in the candidate country within the scope of enlargement is able to be a key element both for the rate and quality of general membership process and also in terms of providing social support to harmonization process" are frequently expressed.

For these reasons, technical assistance projects (like TACSO) in various ways, with the object of establishing a more supporting environment for NGOs in Western Balkan countries, the empowerment of NGOs and the increase in their general capacity and reliability, assuring the quality of services provided by NGOs, providing the continuity of their roles within

democratic processes and maintaining their dynamism as policy actors, are being designed and cooperation agreements are being signed.

At the same time, on account of the fact that EU membership process pressure is felt more intensely in these countries, studies which will enable NGOs to be considered as partners in the implementation of social services or the inclusion of policy making processes and to be involved in social policies are speeded up. On the other hand, by means of the participation of NGOs in advocacy, lobbying and policy-making processes, legislative regulations to assure them to undertake the role of a social representative are tried to be made. For instance, a new Associations and Foundations Law in Macedonia on April, 2010 and Associations Law in Serbia on October, 2009 entered into effect.

Poor relations between the state and civil society in Western Balkans are seen to a great extent as one of the main obstacles to ensure an active and effective participation by NGOs in policy process. For instance, in Albania, bureaucratic circles are considering the NGOs as a political competition element and a probable impediment of reform process. As well, the view of "NGOs

are operating not to serve society-wide but for only persons and institutions forming some certain sections of society" dominates.

Table II: The Status of NGOs in Western Balkan Countries

Country	Descriptive Features and Current State					National Agreement between State and NGO
	Enabling Framework Law	Quick, easy, accessible Registration Process	Public Benefit status defined by Law	NGO's permitted to carry out economic activities	Freedom to fundraise at home and abroad	
Albania	Yes	Yes. But centralized registration reduces Access of local NGO's.	Very loosely defined. Status apparently not regulated.	Yes. NGO's subject to same tax on income as businesses, except those defined as serving public benefit.	Yes	No. Draft joint government-civil society document, Civil Society Charter developed to define relationship and principles of cooperations.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Yes	Yes. Entity level.	Yes	Yes. NGO may form separate entity to carry out economic activities not directly related to its mission.	Yes	Yes. Agreement on Cooperation (2007)
Croatia	Yes	Yes	Precise definition and process of achieving public benefit status unclear in law and in practise.	Yes	Yes	Yes. Programme of Cooperation Between the Government and NG.(2001)
Kosovo	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes. But with the limitation that all services provided must be to further the NGO's stated	Yes	Yes. Memorandum of Cooperation. Between government and

				objectives.		NG establishes NG' right of partnership with government. (2007)
Macedonia	Yes	Yes. Very quick and simple registration process.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes. Strategy for Cooperation of the Government and NG. (2007-2011)
Montenegro	Yes	Yes. Simple and quick registration procedure.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes. Strategy for Cooperation of the Government and NGO.(2009)
Serbia	Yes	Yes	Not defined	Yes	Yes	No

Reference: Bill Sterland&Galina Rizova, The Civil Society Environment in the Western Balkans and Turkey, A Needs Assessment Report Issued by TACSO, August 2010, pp. 45-52.

While the general structure of NGOs in Turkey and Western Balkans may be summarized in this way, with respect to the subject of study, the participation status of NGOs in the processes of establishing and implementing public policies are stated below in table:

Table III: The Participation Status of NGOs in the Processes of Establishing and Implementing Public Policies

Country	Right of NGO's to Participate in Formulation and Implementation of Public Policy
Albania	Yes
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Yes
Croatia	Yes
Kosovo	Yes
Macedonia	Yes
Montenegro	Yes
Serbia	Yes
Turkey	Partial

Reference: Bill Sterland&Galina Rizova, The Civil Society Environment in the Western Balkans and Turkey, A Needs Assessment Report Issued by TACSO, August 2010, p.45- 49.

As seen in the Table, in all countries, excluding Turkey, NGOs are taking part in participation mechanism as an extent of governance model within policy process. As it has been mentioned before, in Balkan countries, although it is troublesome, they are substituting the roles of NGOs in policy determining process as primary actors in the actualization of participative and "democratic" regime in line with EU directives. Also in Turkey, certain capital-based NGOs in particular have the competence to have a word in the policy process and the others are only struggling for existence within their own areas of activity.

3. DIRECTIVE ROLES OF NGOS IN TURKEY AND WESTERN BALKAN STATES WITHIN POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

Within the process of policy-making, as it has been mentioned before, NGOs are playing a directive role by becoming a part of decision-making process at different stages. Their directive roles be as follows: reaching the information, exchanging the views, dialoguing and partnership. In case that they take a leading part at the level of dialogue and partnership in this process, they are regarded as being more active and/or effective within policy-making process (Conf/ple Code 1; 2009:7).

Reaching the Information forms the basis also for other stages in NGOs' participation in decision-making process. It is a stage a which information is unilaterally gathered solely by policymakers and the inclusion of NGOs in the process is not expected at policy-making stage generally directed by bureaucracy. It points out the process in which available information on the policy aimed to be made is compiled in. As for *the Exchange of Views*, it is the stage at which policymakers ask NGOs' opinions on the policy to be made. NGOs are usually informed about the policy in this manner, express their opinions and deliver their comments. However, the general control regarding policy is held by the power of bureaucracy, not by NGOs. As for the stage considered highly important by NGOs, *Dialogue* means the level at which policymakers and NGOs are regularly gathering, having an exchange of ideas mutually and having a general discussion on the policy to be made. At this stage, an interactive expectation for obtaining a common recommendation, strategy or law on the policy is in question. As for the *Partnership* stage regarded by NGOs as the most effective circumstance of the process of agreeing with the decisions, it means division of responsibility on par with the bureaucracy in the process of policy-related agenda setting, in deciding upon and implementing the policy. This is the most significant role assigned to NGOs by the Governance Model in policy process (Conf/ple Code 1; 2009:8).

NGOs, as mentioned above, are playing a role at certain levels in policy process; and within policy cycle, they are getting involved in the process of agenda setting, preparing draft of policy, decision-making, implementation and assessment of policy. Although the bureaucratic

personalities, more clearly policymakers, agree on the policy agenda, this agenda can only be formed by NGOs through campaigns and lobbying activities to be carried out in relation to the issues/matters in hand, requirements and/or needs and interests. Views related to the policy and new policy proposals mostly develop in consequence of these campaign and lobbying activities executed by NGOs. In this process, NGOs' aim is to influence the ones in decision-maker position as regards the policy.

In general terms, the roles of NGOs in policy-making process are in the form of advocating, briefing and awareness-raising, providing assistance to policymakers in line with their specialized knowledge and suggestions, generating new ways and approaches, establishing a policy for a certain group in society and initiating alternative services. They also actualize these roles by using some certain means and mechanisms. This case is being summarized in the Table below(Conf/ple Code 1; 2009:10-14).

Table IV: The Roles of NGOs in Policy-Making Process

Process of Policy-Making	Roles in the Process of Policy-Making						Means and Mechanisms Used
	Advocating	Briefing & Raising Awareness	Specific Knowledge & Suggestions	Initiative Making	Service Providing	Monitoring	
Bringing to Agenda	Proposing the problems, interests and needs of a certain part of the society or a public interest which has not been dealt with up to the present for the agenda	Sharing the defined issues with other participants; enabling members and other groups involved in the process; showing necessary response related to the matter	Revealing the studies carried out by the experts and / or authorities in political sphere, regarding these issues	Putting forward proposals in respect to the policy	Establishing a policy and initiating alternative or unavailable services	-	Online databases, analysis works, campaigns and lobbying activities, reports, posters and brochures, web sites
Preparing Draft of Policy	Looking out for the needs and interests of the group affected by	Informing members and the ones who will benefit from	Carrying out researches on the topics discussed	Developing alternatives for solution by providing concrete	Taking the needs of ones who will benefit from the policy	Enabling issues concerning the parties to be dealt	Researches, web site, campaigns and lobbying activities,

	policy	the policy of the process for preparing draft.	and bringing the subjects expected to be included in the draft of policy into the forefront	models and practical solutions concerning the policy.	into consideration and contributing to the achievement of required conditions for this	promptly by monitoring the entire process of draft preparation	seminar and meetings.
Decision Making	Influencing decision makers - policymakers before putting to the vote	Informing the whole society about the process	Providing detailed info for briefing and influencing decision makers	Revealing data related to the policy again	Providing the necessary and suitable conditions for policy	Making audits required for the process to be democratic, transparent and effective	Brochures, web sites, media notes/ comments, public demonstrations, campaigns and lobbying activities to influence decision makers, plenary sessions open to participation, conferences
Implementation	Introducing the policy	Raising the public awareness by clarifying the advantages and disadvantage of policies which are being implemented	Enabling the policy to be put forth with its all components by concerned people and/or authorities	Revealing the applicability or inapplicability of the policy	Taking primary responsibility in execution or non-execution of the policy	Assessing whether the policy is implemented or not, in line with the objectives determined	Web sites, conferences, seminars, media.

References: Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process, October 2009, pp.7-18.

While the roles of NGOs in policy making process may be summarized in this way, it is quite certain that they will be a distinct agent in the reformulation of policy which is possible to be the next step in accordance with its outcomes and in re-initialization of the cycle for establishing policy.

CONCLUSION

NGOs, both in Turkey and Western Balkan countries, have recently increased in number and also taken their parts in policy process as the third great actor following state-bureaucracy and private sector. Within this period, they appear as actors against the state in transforming the society. What is expected by the state from the NGOs is to carry out studies in line with their goals, prepare reports, do feasibility studies on determining new policies for that region or country. But, NGOs want to be involved in policy process out of their areas of activity, with the effect not only of adaptation to the period of change experienced, but also some certain internal and external dynamics. Mostly under the pressure of bureaucracy, NGOs have remained passive in terms of their policy-making and guiding duty and substantially studied on economic conditions in Turkey and existing policies. They have acted in developing a discourse on problems caused or will be caused by the existing policy.

Nowadays, in aforementioned countries, some NGOs have taken a stand against state and some NGOs have made their presence in cooperation with state. While the reasons of their occurrence have been democratization and the protection of subgroups and disadvantaged groups, now they are in position of actors acting in compliance with the scenario in hand. As well as the scenario may be built by "active" NGOs themselves, also it may be availably presented by international dynamics

Consequently; in particular, it will not be wrong to underline the presence of NGOs as an agent capable of keeping policy process under control throughout the last quarter of century. When their roles within the process of establishing a policy are taken into consideration, they stand as organizations having the power of enabling the applicability of a policy in line with their own interests and opinions or the power of neutralizing a policy in a contrary case, namely in terms of policy's being directive, in brief.

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