

Democratizing Environmental Governance? A Relationship-based Evaluation of Environmental Civil Society's Democratizing Potential

Özge Can & Defne Gönenç

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Rationale

- o Environmental governance is an area where stakeholder-based democracy experiments are increasing (particularly since Rio Declaration, 1992).
- o The purpose is to enhance legitimacy and accountability in environmental projects and policy-making through promotion of advancing civil society's potential.

(Main promise of liberal democratic societies)



Rationale

- o However, current state of relations between the state, non-state and market actors as well as the relations between the non-state actors raise questions about the environmental civil society's democratizing potential.
- o There should be limitations & problems.

Research Question

In order to evaluate the democratizing potential of ENGOs, we look at their external relations with each other as well as with diverse public and private actors about environmental governance in the Aegean region.

How are the relations between the environmental non-state and the state and market actors in the Aegean region of Turkey?



Literature

- Research on environmental NGOs (ENGOs) in Turkey (*Kadirbeyoğlu vd., 2017; Paker vd., 2013; Eryılmaz, 2018; Özen, 2018*)
- Yet, most of them are single or multiple case-based analysis (*Aygün ve Şakacı, 2015; Duru, 1995; Kılınc, 2018*)
- Their main focus: National-level.
- They look at large, well-known organizations.
- Lack of research on local/ regional NGOs and their relationships with diverse actors.



NGOs in Turkey

- 0 The start of green mobilization in the middle of 1980s .
- 0 Professionalization and institutionalization in 1990s.
- 0 Two changes after 2000:
 - 0 *The rise of local environmental movements against the deepening effects of neoliberal politics in the country (Inal ve Turhan, 2019; Özen, 2018).*
 - 0 *De-politization of some ENGOs with more dependence on project funds from the EU institutions and private sector (Zihnioğlu, 2019).*

DERBIS (2021) – 2,602 «environmental, natural life and animal rights» associations active in Turkey.

529 of them (25%) are in the Aegean Region.



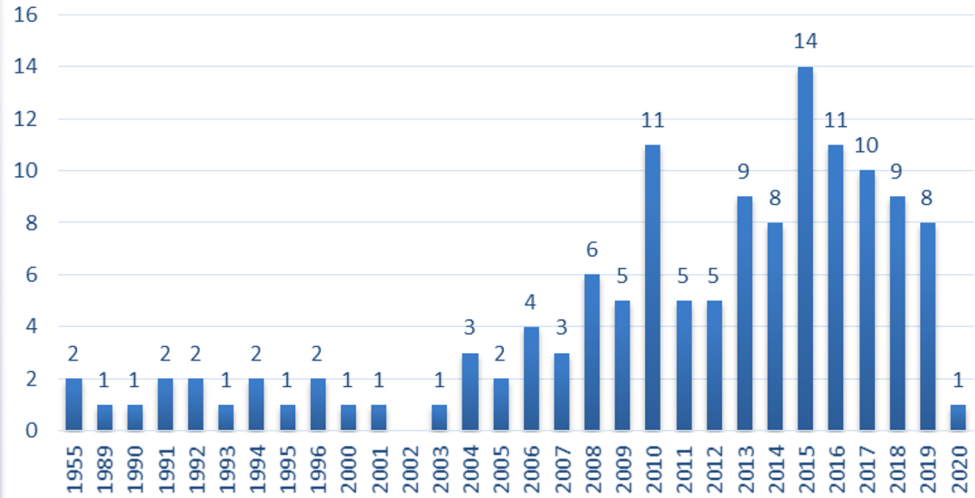
Survey

- 0 *ENGOs in 10 cities in the Aegean Region (including Çanakkale and Balıkesir, coastal cities the Aegean Sea).*
- 0 *306 ENGOs in total: 150 answered! (around %50 success rate)*
- 0 *Questions: 35 closed-ended and 5 open-ended questions*
- 0 *Content of questions: Organizational and financial characteristics, environmental priorities and strategies, relationships with different actors, perception of success*



FINDINGS

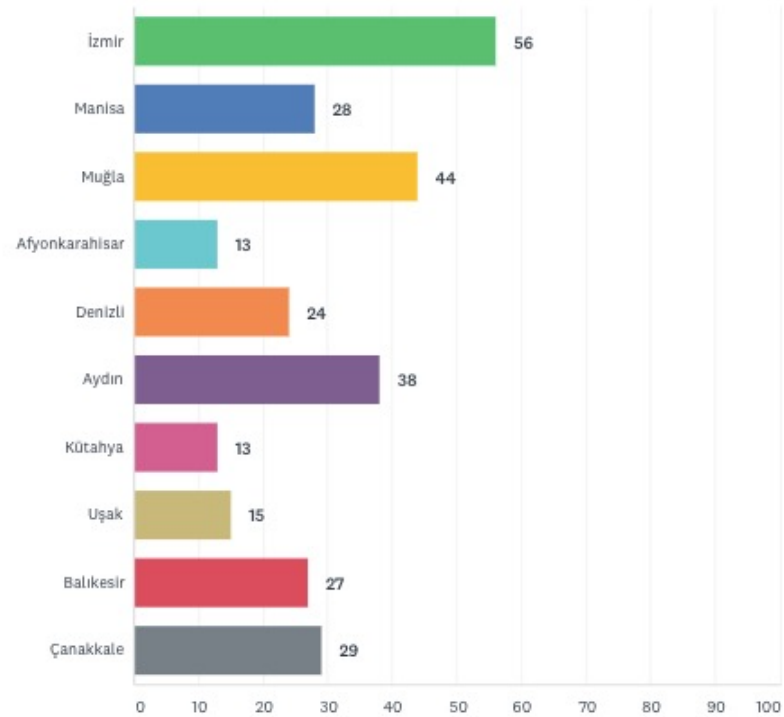
Yearly ENGO Foundings



Period	%
Before 2000	11
2000-2009	20
2010 and after	69

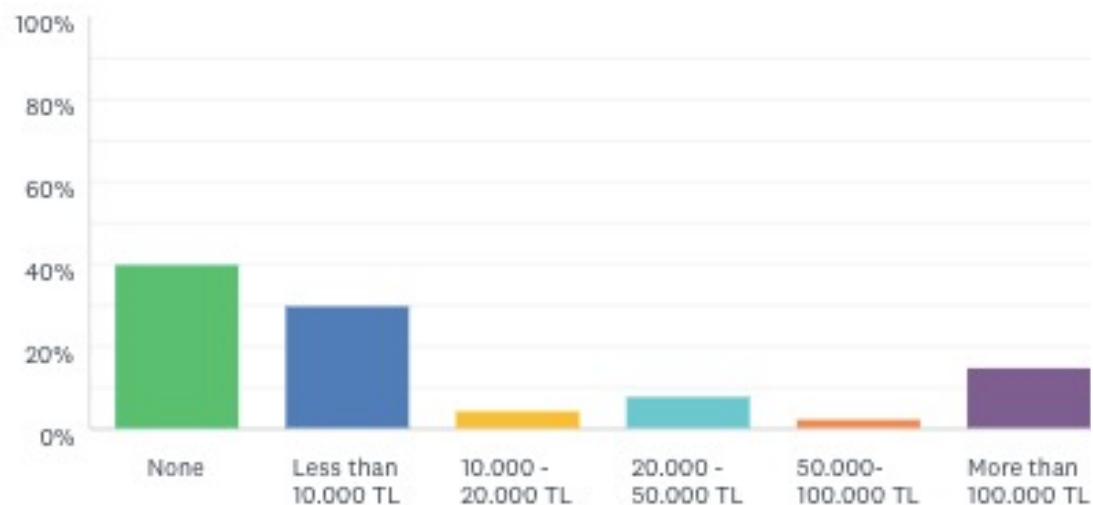
Activity Places

Answered: 127 Skipped: 0



Annual Budget

Answered: 113 Skipped: 14



Main Goals of the ENGOs	%
Enhancing environmental consciousness in the society, creating public opinion	84
Fighting against anti-environmental laws/practices	47
Supporting local community in their environmental struggles and their pro-environmental practices	44
Changing lifestyles; promoting environmental-friendly lifestyle	35
Contributing to the making of pro-environmental laws and decisions	28
Exposing those individuals and organizations who damage the environment	24

Relationships

Other local & national NGOs	65,7 %
Local governments	64 %
Other local & national ENGOs	63,8 %
State actors	56,6 %
Private sector	48,2 %
International ENGOs	40 %
International organizations	37 %

Relationships



Local Administrations:

- *Varying relations - Sometimes good, sometimes bad*
- *Some involvement in city councils and other local committees*
- *However, the majority evaluates their relation as negative*
- *“They listen to us but do not implement our suggestions” (19%)*

Private Sector:

- *Some of them collaborate: «We use it whenever there is an opportunity to collaborate» (39%)*
- *No contact at all (37%)*
- *Being cautious and build selective ties (27%)*

Government Agencies:

- *«They do not take criticisms and suggestions seriously»*
- *No direct contact (20%)*
- *At least one of our activities was stopped by authorities (16%)*

Relationships

With other ENGOs

Very frequent/ frequent=>

- Showing solidarity when necessary (60%)
- Exchange of knowledge & experience (58%)

Never/ rarely =>

- Filing a lawsuit together
- Preparing a formal proposal/ petition together
- Collaborative research activities
- Running a mutual campaign

Obstacles to collaboration:

Poor communication and weakness of solidarity culture

Negative attitudes, egos of directors

Different strategies & principles

Desire to act independently

Types of Actions & Actors



ACTIONS

Discussion

- To fully participate in environmental decision making, management, and policy implementation, and democratic process more broadly, ENGOs must have the resources to sustain their activities and sufficient knowledge (Carmin, 2010).

But the ENGOs in the region are mostly small and have no or little financial resources.

- Different relations patterns with different actors – **yet poor and loose relations overall**
- Relatively stronger local ties compared to national/international broader ties.
- Quality of the relationships is also questionable.
 - *Mostly short-term, weaker ties; deeper, long-term collaborations are rare*
- **Poor collaborations might be one reason why respondent ENGOs find themselves ineffective in influencing decisions-makers.**
- **Very limited use of the potential for democratizing, capacity building and engagement in environmental governance.**

Ευχαριστώ πολύ

ozge.can@yasar.edu.tr

defne.gonenc@yasar.edu.tr

