

London School of Economics and Political Science

## **Europeanisation and Civil Society**

The Early Impact of EU Pre-Accession Policies on Turkish NGOs

**Markus Ketola**

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## Abstract

Turkey's European Union (EU) membership aspirations form a critical junction on the road to further European integration. During the past decade, the role of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) as facilitators of the accession process has grown exponentially in relevance. In Turkey's case, specific policies have emerged to support this element of the pre-accession process. By targeting NGOs, these policies aim to Europeanise and democratise Turkish civil society and in so doing prepare Turkey for eventual EU accession. This logic draws on the liberal democratic tradition that anticipates democratisation to be a key outcome of NGO support. The thesis questions the appropriateness of such assumptions, since Turkish NGOs respond to EU policy in a variety of locally meaningful ways that may circumvent the stated policy outcomes. The wider the gap between policy and reality, the more space there is for NGOs to exercise their agency, and more uncertain the Europeanisation processes become.

The thesis starts out by juxtaposing the European and Turkish perspectives in turn. The EU approach suggests that NGOs behave similarly across different cultural contexts and can be called upon to perform a variety of roles deemed useful for the overall policy process. However, civil society in Turkey has developed along a different trajectory, fostering NGOs that are highly politicised in their activities and cultivating social debates that are essentialist rather than compromising in nature. The latter part of the thesis explores different aspects of this disconnect. The relationships NGOs construct with each other and with governmental bodies are politicised and lack the culture of cooperation expected by EU policy. NGOs exhibit different reactions to EU funding: some embrace it while others pursue it unsuccessfully and grow resentful, or even reject any external funding outright. These differences lead NGOs to generate a variety of survival strategies that minimise the impact of EU policy on changing NGO behaviour where the change is unwelcome by the NGO, or maximise the impact where NGO and EU interests are mutually advanced. The thesis examines how the Europeanisation of Turkish civil society unfolds through a policy process that both affects and is shaped by NGO actors, where the eventual outcomes of EU policy remain uncertain.

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## List of Acronyms

<b>ADD</b>	Association for Kemalist Thought
<b>AKP</b>	Justice and Development Party
<b>AP</b>	Justice Party
<b>BTÇS</b>	Transportation Workers Union
<b>CFCU</b>	Central Finance and Contracts Unit
<b>CHP</b>	Republican People's Party
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>CSDC</b>	Civil Society Development Centre
<b>ÇYDD</b>	Association for the Support of Modern Life
<b>DİSK</b>	Revolutionary Labour Unions Confederation of Turkey
<b>DP</b>	Democrat's party
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ETUC</b>	European Trade Union Confederation
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUSG</b>	Turkish Secretariat General for EU Affairs
<b>HAK-İŞ</b>	Confederation of Turkish Just Workers' Union
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IMO</b>	Turkish Chamber of Civil Engineers
<b>KAMER</b>	Women's Center
<b>KESK</b>	Confederation of Public Workers' Unions
<b>MHP</b>	Nationalist Action Party
<b>MİSK</b>	Nationalist Labour Union's Confederation
<b>MSP</b>	National Salvation Party
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NSC</b>	National Security Council
<b>THK</b>	Turkish Aeronautical Association
<b>TOBB</b>	Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodities Exchanges
<b>TÜRK-İŞ</b>	Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions
<b>WWHR</b>	Women for Women's Human Rights
<b>WB</b>	World Bank

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## Chapter 1

### 1 Introduction

Moving closer to EU membership requires both political will and citizens' support. Civil society organisations can help achieving this. [...] The EU accession perspective should drive forward such reforms that help Turkey to transform itself into a more open and democratic society, with a strong commitment to the values shared by all Europeans. [...] Turkey is a case in point how a strong civil society is both a prerequisite and a consequence of a successful EU accession process. Today, the [*sic*] civil society can play an invaluable role by calling for better dialogue and the spirit of compromise. [...] It needs our support - and a vocal civil society - to ensure the respect for democracy, rule of law and democratic secularism.<sup>1</sup>

Civil society is an intrinsic part of the European Union (EU) enlargement process and Turkish civil society therefore is an important actor in Turkey's pre-accession process for EU membership. For example, the official budget for Turkey's pre-accession assistance in 2008 allocated a 20-30 percent share of the total amount to civil society related initiatives (European Commission 2008a). In the current phase, Turkey and the EU have engaged in a period of "harmonisation" where Turkey is committed to adopting the *acquis*<sup>2</sup> of the European Union. In other words, Turkey is facing a momentous process of change as it executes the required policy reforms. The role envisaged for civil society has much to do with an increased engagement in the policymaking arena, and as such civil society initiatives have largely concentrated on nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).<sup>3</sup> The underlying expectations suggest that NGOs can facilitate the reform process by offering an avenue for dialogue with the public, as well as an alternative party to be consulted during policymaking. Conceptually, this kind of behaviour by NGOs links up with notions of change that have been captured by the phrases "Europeanisation" and "democratisation".

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<sup>1</sup> Rehn, Olli (2008), EU Commissioner for Enlargement. Excerpt from a speech given at the Conference on Civil Society Development in Southeast Europe, Brussels, 17 April 2008.

<sup>2</sup> This term refers to the total body of European law each member state is required to accept as a condition of EU membership

<sup>3</sup> In this thesis the term NGO refers to a particular subset of civil society organisations that engages in advocacy activities. The term civil society organisations (CSOs) is in turn used to refer to the totality of organisational forms that exist in civil society. The purpose of this distinction is to draw a line between organisations that form the focus of the research (NGOs) and other organisations (CSOs). These definitions are further elaborated and clarified in section 1.4 of the Introduction.



As the policy on civil society links to these motives of Europeanisation and democratisation, particular strategies have been adopted when engaging with NGOs. The thesis argues, on the one hand, that the EU policy process views NGOs instrumentally. In other words, NGOs are vehicles to be employed to reach certain aspirational goals that relate to Europeanisation and democratisation. On the other hand, the policy of the EU reflects a universal understanding of the concepts of civil society and NGOs. Hence, the European understanding of the meaning of civil society is transferred, through the policy process, to the Turkish context.

But how does such a vision relate to Turkish civil society that is both culturally and historically different from European civil societies? For some observers civil society in Turkey exists more in quantity than in quality (Şimşek 2004 p. 252; Kalaycıoğlu 2004), referring to the fact that even though numerically speaking Turkish civil society has developed tremendously, the behaviour of civil society actors has been such that the qualitative impact on the processes of democratisation and Europeanisation remains limited. At the same time civil society has been identified as a key arena where both of these processes are expected to unfold (Göle 1994; Keyman and Öniş 2007; cf. Keyman and Icduygu 2003 p. 270). It is the apparent disconnect between the importance attached to civil society in theoretical and policymaking terms as an engine of transformative processes and the practical limitations for civil society to effectively manage this role that is of concern here. Does civil society in Turkey generate the kind of response that the Europeanisation and democratisation policies expect?

This thesis is an attempt to engage with such questions. The relationship between the EU and Turkish civil society is poised between two sets of interests that possess an air of incommensurability. For the EU, Turkish civil society is one of the means to exact change required by the EU accession process. This policy of Europeanisation, that aims at meeting accession conditions such as full compliance with EU *acquis*, is realised through a unidirectional set of requirements that reflects the bureaucratic demands of “EUization” and pays less attention to the reality of NGO existence on the ground (Diez et al. 2005 p. 2). Turkish NGOs, however, are not passive recipients of these policies. Domestic pressures and issues interleave with the opportunities brought about by EU funding. Precisely because a gap exists between the EU and NGO expectations, the latter are compelled to search for locally meaningful responses to the opportunities and challenges that EU funding poses. NGOs expect

their contribution to be taken seriously, in the sense of being more than mere vehicles that can be used to complete projects. They expect to be treated more as equal partners who bring something unique to the partnership and should have more influence in determining the “what” and “how” elements of projects. Their reactions are determined by these expectations together with the domestic political context. Whether NGOs deem these expectations to be met is at least partly determined by the capacity of the NGO to rise to the challenge of managing EU-funded projects.

Under these circumstances, civil society actors generate a variety of reactions and responses. This point of view offers a different way of understanding Europeanisation as a local process where the EU-led practices are internalised by domestic actors in their modes of operation. In this way Europeanisation can unfold differently from “intended Europeanisation” (Ioakimidis 2001 p. 74), spawning unintentional consequences as local actors attach different meanings and understandings to the processes of change they are witnessing.

The study aims to contribute to an understanding of how these differences materialise and how they are negotiated. It does so through a series of interviews with civil society activists, EU bureaucrats and Turkish officials that have been involved in the EU funding processes, exploring how civil society actors behave and why certain practices occur. This research scrutinises the tension that inevitably exists between the need to design broad policy objectives and the everyday practices of the recipients of such policies. The new systems that are introduced by these policies – the system of EU civil society funding being the focus here – need to be (and are being) internalised and mediated before they acquire meaning at the local level. This understanding places certain conditions on and limitations to what can be achieved by an externally designed policy intervention.

It is in this context that the processes of change – Europeanisation and democratisation – need to be analysed. EU policy towards civil society contains an assumption suggesting that the role of civil society is an instrumental one. In other words, local NGOs are expected to act as engines of change. However, these organisations are embedded in their local environment, where the change processes are likely to acquire new meaning that has been mediated and reinterpreted by the NGOs. What a particular policy intervention, designed with democratisation and Europeanisation in mind, can achieve, is therefore limited by the local context and by the behaviour of the local actors. The notion of local context is further complicated by

the fact that it does not constitute a cohesive whole. Within the general context of Turkey, several sub-contexts can be identified that influence actors' behaviour and induce NGOs to react in a colourful array of ways. As EU policy assumptions about civil society are not fully congruent with the Turkish experience of civil society, NGOs negotiate this incongruence by carving out new roles for themselves that are more locally relevant. These observations, then, highlight NGOs' agency and autonomy vis-à-vis the EU's civil society policy.

### **1.1 The broader literature**

These discussions bring together three broad themes of literature that form the backbone of this research project. One theme is that of donor-civil society relations. What is the donor (EU) rationale for funding NGOs, where does this come from and what impact does it have on the relationship with NGOs and civil society? A second theme relates to the EU accession process as Europeanisation. The accession negotiations are based on specific criteria that Turkey has agreed to abide by. What are the normative and practical conditions of entry, where do the priorities within this process lie for the EU and for the Turkish government, where is the room for manoeuvre for Turkish NGOs and how does this shape the experience of NGOs? The third theme is that of the Turkish context. What are the particularities of the Turkish case that are relevant to our understanding of how the accession process will unfold? This research project is situated in the intersection of these three sets of literature and the following section elaborates on the conceptual tools offered by each of these.

#### *Donors and civil society*

The relationship between the EU and Turkish civil society can be best described as a variant of the "donor-NGO relationship" that is widely discussed in the literature on civil society. The focus on NGOs forms a subfield within civil society studies, looking at particular types of formal organisations that operate within the civil societal space, whose work often resonates strongly with donor objectives.<sup>4</sup> One defining element of these relationships is the existence of a facility for providing financial support. Quite often the growth of the NGO sector has been supply-driven, meaning that the organisations do not necessarily arise out of local needs and may not be the most

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<sup>4</sup> For further clarification on these terms, see section 1.4 of this chapter.

suitable for the needs and requirements of the country in question (Ottaway and Carothers 2000 p. 299). Donor priorities shift frequently, forcing NGOs to realign their interests in order to compete for funding (Howell and Pearce 2001a). Yet, chasing the money trail may have a negative impact on the ability of advocacy NGOs to retain a reputation for independence, a quality that is considered a key ingredient in being able to influence a political process (Edwards and Hulme 1996; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Ottaway and Carothers 2000; Parks 2008; Bratton 1989). The supply-driven nature of donor funding leads one to question what exactly is being achieved with the help of these funds, and how this relates to the stated aims of donor-funded programs.

Democratisation, often in connection with human rights initiatives, has become a critical part of the civil society funding rationale for international donor organisations. Within the conventional neo-Tocquevillean views of civil society (a theme Chapter Three elaborates on), greater civil society activism is likely to lead to more accountable governance, more effective policy implementation and to democratic reform (Mercer 2002). The existence of civil society in itself is therefore taken as a positive sign of democratic development (Diamond 1994; Putnam et al. 1994). It is labelled as “good” and becomes conceptually distinct from the “bad” state and market (Bebbington et al. 2008 p. 6). Carothers (1997) points to a duality of purpose behind democracy promotion by donors. On the one hand, democratisation is seen as an end in itself; it brings freedom and governmental accountability which will improve peoples lives. On the other hand, democracy is good for social and economic development and is therefore regarded as one component of a successful development programme. This latter purpose, Carothers suggests, has been more prevalent in donor programmes in Africa, where economic issues have taken priority (cf. Crawford 1997, 2001). Policies aiming for democratisation, therefore, tend to interlace with social and economic aims.

The argument on the social and economic benefits of civil societal development is often framed around the impact civil society can have on government effectiveness. The CSOs contribute by assisting in the delivery of services (Robinson 1997) or by supporting governmental policymaking processes (Giddens 1998). Governments need not rely only on the possibilities provided by the public and market options, as a third option exists that combines the logic of the first two (Etzioni 1973). Civil society can constitute a “third sector” which offers new solution where market and government have previously failed (Salamon 1987). The “logic of the third sector” is a frequently used concept that describes how the donor community operationalises

civil society through funding (Richter 2002; Henderson 2002; Hemment 2004; Cook and Vinogradova 2006). The third sector can be regarded as the professional realm of NGOs, where organisations serve a narrower function as market-like entrepreneurs, operating in a professional, business-like manner. Those groups that successfully engage in such programmes are engulfed by the professional and bureaucratic activities surrounding the grant programs, bringing them closer to the donors and distancing them from other civil society groups as well as from the rest of society (Richter 2002; Hemment 2004). Civil society actors, who ought to be embedded in the formal and informal institutions, are uprooted and re-planted among donors and third sector professionals. Here again a certain discrepancy between donor aims and local reality occurs. The view that civil society is “good” for social and economic development is one that resonates more with current policy trajectories in the developed, Western world, than with the reality of how civil society actors operate on the ground.

These kinds of donor efforts to engage NGOs have been criticised for being estranged from the political realities of the local context and civil society. Local civil society is, after all, the domain within which the funded NGOs operate. Subsequent donor support instrumentalises civil society, making it the means to an end, not an end in itself. This erodes the political edge of civil society as it becomes a vehicle for delivering goals conceived by the donors (Howell and Pearce 2001b), and as Bebbington et al. observe, “NGOs are only NGOs in any politically meaningful sense of the term if they are offering alternatives to dominant models, practices and ideas about development” (2008 p. 3). What is more, the donor goals often assume an air of universality, purporting a particular package of moral values and organisational forms as the only one available. Civil society becomes confined within the western model of liberal individualism (Hann and Dunn 1996 p. 3), a context in which the ideas of NGOs and projects become reified as the vehicle through which change can be delivered (Howell and Pearce 2001a). Civil society has been “dusted off and deodorized to suit a variety of ideological, intellectual and practical needs” (White 1994 p. 370). Has civil society, as Chandoke suggests, been a victim of its own success, where popularity has made it an overly consensual and flattened concept (2001), leading to overly superficial and generic donor strategies (Carothers 1997)? These questions and concerns highlight the need for a different approach. Mindful of this, others consider civil society as a site of “struggle, multivocality and paradox”

(Glasius et al. 2004 p. 10) and emphasise the need to pay careful attention to the informal and interpersonal practices present in civil society (Hann and Dunn 1996).

It is in the slipstream of such arguments and observations that this thesis evolves. NGOs are not passive recipients of project funding and through the actions of NGOs projects take on local relevance. Following the actor-oriented perspective (Long 2001), the thesis explores (particularly in Chapter Seven) how the discrepancies that exist between donors and NGOs are negotiated. Drawing on the work of Lewis and Mosse (2006) I describe NGOs as “brokers” and “translators”, and build on this framework by suggesting two additional roles (“navigators” and “antagonists”) that emerge in the Turkish context. The purpose of this fourfold characterisation of roles is to convey the colourful array of strategies that Turkish NGOs employ in their activities. In fact, the reasons why NGOs became such popular partner organisations for donors in the first place – possession of local knowledge, innovative practices, ability to function as intermediaries between locals and external donors – are still very much present in how NGOs operate. However, the way in which these characteristics manifest themselves may not be directly beneficial to the aims of donor projects. Rather, they are governed in the first instance by the domestic socio-cultural context. Therefore, the political and socio-cultural realities of the domestic context in Turkey ought to be at the forefront of any explanation put forward.

### *Europeanisation*

As others have observed, Europeanisation is not a theory in itself. Rather it is a phenomenon, a puzzle that requires explanation (Graziano and Vink 2008; Radaelli 2004). Thus, using the above arguments to make sense of EU-NGO relations in Turkey leads to a particular explanation of what is meant by Europeanisation. There are three broad perspectives. First, at its broadest, Europeanisation alludes to the relationship between norms, policies, rules and regulations that exist at the European level, and those that are present at the national level. This type of Europeanisation is often cited in the context of EU accession negotiations, referring to a top-down process where EU directives and policies are being adopted by nation states (Kazamias and Featherstone 2001). Second, and alternatively, Europeanisation can be seen as a process of domestic pressures feeding into the decisions of national actors, which in turn may guide the forms of governance at the European level. These two sources of influence are likely to interact, working as a two-way process that determines the final form

Europeanisation takes (Kazamias and Featherstone 2001 p. 6). Third, Europeanisation can be seen as a purely domestic process, where local actors, local problems and local discourse engage with European variables, and where the outcomes feed directly back into the domestic environment (Radaelli 2004). The key point of difference here is that the domestic reactions are not purely reactions to European influences. What is common to all three perspectives, something inherent in the very word Europeanisation, is the underlying focus on change. Where they differ is in how change is perceived to manifest itself, and subsequently, how best to study it. The last of these three approaches adheres to a broader notion of impact that tries to capture the more nuanced processes of socialisation that are taking place, as EU policies are internalised by local actors, and as such it is the concept that resonates most closely with the approach adopted in this thesis.

Each of these three perspectives, in their own way, retains some relevance to the case of EU civil society funding in Turkey.<sup>5</sup> EU funding is anchored to the Copenhagen Criteria, which set forth the political, economic and policy requirements for all new member states and form the backbone of a top-down, technical process of Europeanisation. At the same time the NGOs that receive EU funding are embedded in and informed by the domestic political and cultural practices. The pressures and influences that derive from the local context feed into the decisions NGOs make within the funding framework. Finally, NGO behaviour spills over to areas that cannot be understood solely by reference to EU-imposed Europeanisation, or by NGO reactions to Europeanisation-related policies. NGOs are able to operate in a variety of ways, utilising EU funding and other normative forms of Europeanisation in their domestic activities, yet without outcomes that may be considered explicitly Europeanising.

Given that the thesis is concerned primarily with the behaviour of the actors on the ground and their responses to Europeanisation processes in Turkey, the study aligns with “sociological institutionalism” (also called constructivist institutionalism). This is one of the three “new institutionalist” approaches that are frequently applied to the study of Europeanisation within European Studies (Kazamias and Featherstone

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<sup>5</sup> Although the literature most often deals with Europeanisation within the EU’s borders, the dynamics in the enlargement context are principally the same and the literature has been adapted (Bulmer 2008; Radaelli 2000).

2001; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2008).<sup>6</sup>

Sociological institutionalism emphasises the importance of the informal rules and norms that influence decision-making. When an institution influences the behaviour of actors, this is not simply down to a threat of sanctions or conditionalities that may have been imposed. These actors must internalise the responsibilities placed upon them by the institution. It is a question of socialisation, whereby actors internalise the new rules and norms. This in turn affects how they see their interests (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006: 395). Similarly, Diez describes Europeanisation as an enabling concept, not as something that causes things directly. It energises actors to act by creating certain conditions, but it does not prescribe a certain way of behaving (1999). The decisions made by the actors involved ultimately determine the outcomes of Europeanisation. The structures of European integration and of Europeanisation are not rigid but vague.

Europeanisation relates to the change processes that are brought about by the EU and at the heart of this influence is the policy of conditionality. In other words, the reward of EU membership is contingent on the fulfilment of a long list of reforms. In comparison to the kind of donor-NGO relationship that is described in much of the literature (Mercer 2002; Howell and Pearce 2001b; Carothers 2004), the relationship in Turkey, given the broader context of Europeanisation and the EU accession, has processes attached that are not present elsewhere. Whilst the formal funding procedures are unidirectional (the EU determines project aims and decides on monitoring criteria), there are numerous opportunities for civil society actors to internalise and mediate the system of funding so that it gains meaning in the local context. In this way, the actor-oriented perspective offers interesting insights to the role played by civil society in this context. Furthermore, the impact of EU funding is not limited to those CSOs that receive funding. It also has an effect on the behaviour of civil society actors that are unable, or refuse to apply for funding. Given the existence

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<sup>6</sup> The other two approaches are “rational choice institutionalism” and “historical institutionalism”. Rational choice institutionalism assumes that actors have fixed preferences and always employ strategies that aim to maximise self-interest. It emphasises the role of major EU institutions, such as the European Commission and European Parliament, as the structuring agents between other actors. Historical institutionalism considers the short-term and long-term impact of institutions. It agrees on the initial premise of rational choice institutionalism – that institutions and actors are bound in a strategic game of interest bargaining – but foresees the development of path dependencies in the long term. That is, institutional ways of behaving, or cultures, develop that constrict the strategic choices available to actors under rational choice institutionalism. This is not to say these approaches hold no explanatory power, yet they remain less relevant to the type of empirical task at hand here (Kazamias and Featherstone 2001 pp. 7-9).



of such conditioning factors, the funding operation ultimately has uncertain outcomes. A complex web of interactions and responses arise from these dynamics and pull in various directions, making the outcomes of Europeanisation unpredictable.

### *The case of Turkey*

Since the latter years of the Ottoman Empire, and with renewed vigour since the formation of the Turkish republic in 1923, Westernisation has played an important role in defining the social and political course Turkey has taken. Located at the junction where East meets West, Westernisation referred to scientific and technological innovation leading to modernisation, to be juxtaposed by the desire to retain Islam as a key cultural reference point. More recently, the Westernisation thesis has taken on a different shape in light of the EU accession talks. Political reform, together with issues such as democratisation and transparency, has become a central element of the Westernisation process. This mood change is reflected in the changing terminology, as it is the democratisation aspect that distinguishes Europeanisation from the earlier meanings given to the concept of Westernisation (Grigoriadis 2008 p. 35).

Nevertheless, the fractured nature of the debate that has crystallised in recent years around the issue of Europeanisation in Turkey speaks to the complexities involved. Nicholas Sarkozy, the French premier, and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel are among those who advocate for a “privileged partnership” instead of a full-fledged EU membership (Euractiv 2009a).<sup>7</sup> On the other hand the former British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, has called a change of heart on Turkey’s EU accession as “unconscionable” (Euractiv 2009b). These examples of the fractured discourse with regard to Turkey’s membership illustrate that the EU member states do not represent a single ideological vision about what it means to be European today (Keyman and Öniş 2007 p. 92). Nor is there agreement on what the future economic or political direction of Europe will be. What Europe, or the European Union means or represents is increasingly contested.

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<sup>7</sup> The proponents of this approach point to the size of Turkey’s population, the danger this poses in terms of immigration, and the cultural differences Turkey poses as a Muslim country and argue that full integration of Turkey within the European institutions is undesirable if not impossible. In practice, this solution involves closing negotiations on 27-28 of the 35 chapters that completion of membership negotiations would consist of. It aims to preserve the special relationship between the EU and Turkey by finding a “third way” between membership and non-membership. For an assessment of this approach, see Icener (2007) and Hakura (2005).

Similar debates have taken place within Turkey as well, where the debate is divided between the “Eurosceptics” and the “Reformers”. Since the 2002 parliamentary elections won by the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP), the initiative for democratic reform shifted away from the republican/nationalist camp (which were at the forefront of previous Westernisation programmes), towards a political movement that has its roots in the traditional, religiously motivated politics (who previously were less enthusiastic about Turkey’s Westernising zeal). Thus today, whilst the AKP is at the cusp of the reformist/Europeanisation movement, the secular elite has found itself being sceptical of these reforms, on the grounds that they instigate unwanted divisions along religious-secular lines (Müftüler-Baç 2005; Carkoğlu 2002).

The impact of Europeanisation has indeed become an important explanatory factor in the recent analysis of Turkish society and politics. The potential of EU membership set out a favourable atmosphere within which the consolidation of Turkey’s democratic regime has been made possible (Öniş 1999). Thus it was only once Turkey’s candidacy status was confirmed by the European Council in December 1999 that a rapid and far-reaching programme of reform was initiated in Turkey (Müftüler-Baç 2005; Smith 2003; Bretherton and Vogler 2006). Between 2001 and 2004, nine separate constitutional reform packages were passed by the Turkish parliament addressing far-reaching legal reforms (developments that are discussed further in Chapter Two). On the other hand, Eralp has observed how a converse effect has been caused by the gradual downturn in the relationship since 2004.<sup>8</sup> The institutional stalemate within Europe caused by the halted progress on the Lisbon Treaty and slow-down of the EU enlargement policy were met with increased hostility and scepticism in Turkey.<sup>9</sup> The EU conditionalities were not balanced with appropriate incentives, leading to a situation where compliance with EU demands has increased political costs associated with EU reform, exacerbating the downturn in the relationship. Others, both within Turkey and the EU, have argued for the “Middle Easternisation” (as opposed to Europeanisation) of Turkey’s foreign policy, where a

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<sup>8</sup> Eralp, Atila (2009) “Lost time in the Turkey-EU relationship”. Paper read at the *Turkish Contemporary Studies Research Seminar Series*, London School of Economics, London, 26 October 2009.

<sup>9</sup> The Treaty of Lisbon was offered as a softer alternative to the European constitution, which was rejected by the French and Dutch voters in referendums in 2005. This rejection reflected a desire to retain more decision-making powers at the national level, a sentiment that was in part fueled by the concern over Turkey’s potential membership.

shift away from the West has occurred in response to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the more recent partial suspension of the EU accession talks (Oğuzlu 2008; Economist 2010). Since then, the rising political tensions with Israel following the death of nine Turkish citizens on international waters by Israeli soldiers in June 2010, together with concern over the potential effect of the Greek financial crisis on Turkey's accession have created further political ripples for Turkey's European aspirations. Nevertheless, politicians previously in support of Turkey's membership, in countries such as the United Kingdom and Sweden, remain deeply committed to the cause (Turkish Daily News 2010).

## 1.2 Identifying Research Questions

The research questions addressed stem from a juxtaposition of the above three themes: donors and civil society, Europeanisation, and the Turkish context. The function of the questions is to investigate the disconnect between EU policy and the response of Turkish civil society actors to the EU policy processes. The main research question therefore is “*Why, in the context of EU civil society funding in Turkey, are processes of Europeanisation unpredictable in their outcomes?*” I am referring to both the formal bureaucratic processes and informal social processes of Europeanisation, as it is the entanglement of the formal and informal that is the focus of the thesis, and a root cause of the unpredictability. Every system, including that of EU funding to Turkish NGOs, needs to be internalised and mediated before it garners meaning. There are three salient parts to this puzzle that require explanation, each of which forms a research sub-question for the thesis.

The first question asks “*What are the frameworks of support that are present in EU civil society assistance?*” The term “framework” here refers to the assemblage of devices – policies, language, methods of distribution and monitoring – that the EU uses to deliver and justify NGO funding. Together these form the framework within which NGOs are formally expected to operate.

The second question asks “*How does the Turkish political context mediate the impact of EU funding on NGOs?*” In other words, how appropriate is the EU funding strategy in this context, what are the differences and how do these differences affect the actions of the actors involved?

The final question, taking its lead from the previous, therefore asks “*How do NGOs react when faced with choices about how to engage with EU funding policy?*” This question explores the discrepancies between NGO interests and EU policy, and how NGOs navigate these discrepancies, with particular emphasis on the various processes through which EU policy is internalised, resisted or manoeuvred. Through these questions the research ultimately aims to understand how the unpredictability of EU policy outcomes in relation to civil society is shaped by NGO actors. An exploration of this two-way process between policy formulation and operationalisation of policy on the ground is helpful in understanding why Europeanisation has unfolded in the way it has.

### *Hypotheses*

The research questions aim to account for the disconnect between Europeanisation efforts that are shrouded in instrumental and universal understandings of civil society, and how NGOs operate in reality. It is suggested that NGOs operate in ways that cannot be accounted for by this instrumental and universal conception of EU policy. Two hypotheses are employed in an effort to answer why the EU’s policy strategy does not unfold as expected. First of all, EU policy, by its nature, employs an external agenda for reform that rarely accommodates the domestic political environment. Thus a gap forms between the EU policy approach and the domestic politics, making any particular anticipated outcome uncertain. Second, NGOs are not absorbed passively into the EU policy process, but they are autonomous agents. NGOs have the freedom to operate in a number of roles in relation to EU policy, whether they are positioned inside or outside the formal EU policy process. This highlights the importance of informal rules and norms that define how actors internalise the external agenda introduced by EU policy. Where the policy intervention lacks the space for these processes of internalisation to unfold, the recipient actors are more likely to exhibit resistance and resentment in their actions. Whether NGOs interpret the EU agenda as a new, fresh approach to be embraced, or as an external agenda to be resisted, is contingent on a multitude of factors, such as NGO capacity to cope with the demands of project management, or the domestic political context in which the NGO finds itself. For example, an NGO with a negative view of the current pro-European government is likely to relate more suspiciously to EU projects. The variety of

responses NGOs generate in relation to EU policy are partly responsible for the unpredictability and uncertainty present in policy processes.

### **1.3 Research Methods**

A key aim of my fieldwork, which took place between April 2007 and July 2008, was to unpack and learn more about the processes through which EU funding has been made available to NGOs, and how (if at all) NGOs have interacted in these processes. Through a series of interviews with NGO representatives I wanted to better understand the opinions and attitudes they held towards EU funding, and for what reasons.<sup>10</sup> I conducted additional interviews with the other key actors involved, namely those working on behalf of the EU and the Turkish government. I interviewed individuals working for the EU delegation in Ankara and individuals working in the intermediary organisations that oversee the operationalisation of EU funding through projects, such as the Civil Society Development Centre (CSDC) and the Central Finance and Contracts Unit (CFCU). These interviews helped to illuminate the governmental and bureaucratic concerns that inform NGO support processes.

Overall, 42 interviews were conducted where the methods for selecting the interviewees combined elements of purposive sampling and cascading. In purposive sampling the respondents are selected on the basis of how they fit a particular profile that is relevant to the research. Although such non-random methods may cause selection bias, the use of random sampling in small-n<sup>11</sup> research is likely to generate more serious biases (King et al. 1994). In other words, when the number of interviews is too small to be statistically significant, the probability for chance outcomes is higher. In such circumstances it is advisable to establish a rationale for purposive sampling instead. Cascading refers to a method where interviewees offer suggestions for further interviews, and help with contacting such individuals. The interviewer, quite literally, cascades from one interview to the next. Such selection methods were useful in targeting key respondents whose contribution was going to be highly relevant to the research.

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<sup>10</sup> A topic guide outlining the broad content of these interviews is included in the Appendix.

<sup>11</sup> Small-n studies refer to research that is based on an in-depth study of relatively small number samples, such as case studies or in-depth interviews, where the data collected is not broad enough to lend itself to statistical analysis. It is the opposite of “large-n” studies where the sample sizes are sufficiently large for statistical analysis to be possible.

The methods of sampling employed traced the following path. First of all, the research required a broad exposure to NGOs that had experience of working with the EU, and for this reason I located my research in the three cities that have benefited most from EU funding: Istanbul, Ankara and Diyarbakir. In contacting NGOs I made use of online databases of Turkish NGOs as well as a directory of NGO contact details published by the History Foundation of Turkey (*Tarih Vakfi*) (2006). I limited these interviews largely to actors that had experience of working in advocacy NGOs, as an understanding of the Turkish advocacy environment was central to being able to address the appropriateness of the EU approach. In addition, the NGOs interviewed ranged widely in terms of their experience of EU funding, from veterans of EU project funding to those who had never even made an application for funds. In this way the research is able to say something about the early impact of pre-accession related funding also among those civil society actors that are not directly touched by the grants and the projects.

I began the research with interviews that focused on women's NGOs and youth NGOs. Environmental NGOs could have offered an alternative research focus within the advocacy community (Adaman and Arsel 2005), but given the prevalence of youth and women's issues on the EU agenda in Turkey, such focus made it easier to identify NGOs with experience of EU funding. In addition, the research included interviews with government officials located in Ankara, as well as with intermediary organisations that operate in-between the EU and Turkish government, facilitating the funding process. As the research evolved I pursued different paths, interviewing five advocacy organisations working on broader human rights issues and on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transsexual (GLBT) rights, for example.<sup>12</sup> In part the decision to broaden the approach was due to the fact that during the fieldwork it became increasingly clear that the aims of the research did not require a focus on any particular type of NGO; rather, the central aim was to cast a wider net to include different types of reactions and experiences that had emerged in relation to EU funding. Broadening the organisational focus helped also with my efforts to triangulate data. Where possible, I tried to ensure that each opinion expressed in this thesis originated from more than one respondent. In most cases the conclusions also draw on responses from

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<sup>12</sup> See the table 1 for more detail on interviews.

more than one type of NGO, ensuring that the issues are not specific to, for example, youth NGOs alone.

The data for the thesis was collected and analysed in the following manner: The majority of the interviews were recorded, supplemented by notes that were taken during interviews. As soon as possible after the interview I would consolidate the notes with the recording, and type out a detailed account of the interview. For a handful of the interviews I decided not to use a recording device because in my experience in certain occasions it interfered with the interview process, as respondents were less forthcoming and less comfortable with the interview situation. Therefore, particularly during my visit to Diyarbakir, where NGO activity until recently has been under greater scrutiny by the state, I made the decision not to record the interviews. In these cases I made extensive notes during the interview, which I then typed out in full as soon as possible after the interview. Whilst a majority of the interviews were conducted in English, where this was not possible (such as during my stay in Diyarbakir) I hired a translator to help with the interviews. Following data collection, I entered all of the interview data into NVivo 8, a computer programme designed for processing qualitative data. Following a period of coding, I then generated reports that collected all interview material relevant for each code in one document. These documents were then used as the bases for data analysis in the empirical chapters. In total I conducted 42 semi-structured interviews. A majority of the interviews (34) focused on representatives of Turkish NGOs (where possible the interviewees were chief executives, or equivalent, and where this was not possible I interviewed programme directors with experience of managing projects, or other staff members). Other interviews focused on EU bureaucrats working at the EU delegation for Turkey and government officials working both for the Department of Association and for the Turkish parliament. Additionally, I interviewed members of intermediary organisations that operate between EU and Turkish government, and two smaller donor organisations. These interviews are broken down in more detail in the table below:

<b>Type of Interview / Location</b>	<b>Istanbul</b>	<b>Ankara</b>	<b>Diyarbakir</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Women</b>	9	5	3	17
<b>Youth</b>	6	5	-	11
<b>Human rights</b>	1	-	1	2
<b>Gay rights</b>	1	1	1	3
<b>Officials</b>	-	4	-	4
<b>Intermediaries</b>	-	3	-	3
<b>Other donors</b>	1	1	-	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	18	19	5	42

**Table 1:** A table displaying all interviews conducted, categorised by type of interview (across, left-to-right) and by interview location (top-down).

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews seem well placed to enable access to the type of information required for solving the research puzzle presented here. In addition to factual information, semi-structured interviews can provide insights into the context within which the interaction and decision-making among the different actors takes place. Each respondent offers certain views, interpretations and understandings that are shaped by their position in the social context under investigation (Mason 2002). I decided to keep the interviews anonymous; early on some of the respondents requested this, and once I mentioned to other interviewees that I would keep the material anonymous, this seemed to relax the interview situation and increase the willingness of respondents to reveal information. These observations concur with findings elsewhere on the impact of anonymity on respondent's willingness to reveal information (Aquilino 1994). Hence, in this thesis interviewees are not mentioned by name but by code.

#### **1.4 Definitions: civil society, CSO and NGO**

There are three interrelated terms in particular that require clarification. These are civil society, CSO and NGO. It is easy to use the three terms interchangeably, referring roughly to the same phenomenon. The nuances and differences between the terms, however are quite important in the context of this thesis. The term civil society refers



to the arena of collective action that is shaped by shared interests and values.<sup>13</sup> This arena is populated by a variety of organisational forms, both formal and informal. These include registered associations and foundations, development organisations, human rights organisations, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, trade unions, business associations, advocacy groups, community groups and hometown associations, to mention a few. Institutionally civil society is separate from the state, the market and the family, although in practice these boundaries remain fluid and porous.

The definition put forward by the theorists Cohen and Arato, for example, exemplifies this fluidity by placing the family within the realm of civil society:

[civil society is] a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication" (1992 p. 134).

Whilst the inclusion of family within civil society may establish somewhat unconventional boundaries around the concept, this highlights the blurriness of the boundaries. For other theorists such as Ernest Gellner whose views are outlined in detail in Chapter Two, civil society comes to exist only once a society is able to forge associational links that surpass the family. In fact, Gellner argues that the predominance of primordial kinship and familial ties prevents the development of civil society in more traditional societies (1994, 1981). This logic is found also in the broad theoretical approach that links civil society with the emergence of capitalist industrialisation, whereby civil society is regarded as a modern category that moves beyond the family.<sup>14</sup> However, as Jude Howell points out, the inclusion of the intimate sphere among the other spheres of social interaction helps us understand how "the family shapes the norms, practices, and behaviours in the public realm, that is, in state, civil society, and market institutions" (Howell 2007 p. 418; cf. Seckinelgin 2010). Even though the thesis does not investigate the relationship between family and civil society per se, Howell's argument reflects a premise also found within this thesis: that locally constructed values and norms are an important influence in shaping the behaviour of NGOs, which in turn contributes to the unpredictability of NGO

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<sup>13</sup> This interpretation draws heavily on the definition put forward by LSE's Centre for Civil Society [http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what\\_is\\_civil\\_society.htm](http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm)

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*

behaviour in the context of EU funding. Whilst conceptually it is possible to define civil society as a list of organisational types and place it outside the state and family, in practice the boundaries are heavily perforated.

The “third sector” (a term coined by Amitai Etzioni and later extensively developed by Lester Salamon) refers to a very similar, but somewhat more limited space in society when compared with civil society. The crucial difference being that within the use of third sector there are embedded certain expectations of the behaviour of these organisations. These expectations derive from a link that has been established between governmental operations and civil society. In other words, how can NGOs contribute to improved governmental conduct? Thus, there are more specific expectations of the role of civil society in terms of contributing, through activities, to the delivery of public policy (service delivery) or to the development of new policies (advocacy). As Chapter Three will show, the concept of the third sector is particularly relevant to how the EU understands civil society.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) are further denominations of this sphere of associational life. There are no universally agreed definitions, and in this thesis these terms are applied in the following way. Whilst CSOs refer to the totality of organisations and organisational forms that exist within civil society, the term NGO refers to a particular subset of organisations relevant to the study: the professional associations in Turkey that engage in advocacy work. The primary constituent of this group are organisations that work on rights-based issues, such as human rights, women’s rights, youth rights and child rights, for example. The majority of the organisations researched in the context of this thesis have been advocacy NGOs, working on such rights-based issues. Organisations such as trade unions, churches, hometown associations, mosques and mosque-building associations would therefore be categorised as CSOs in the context of the thesis, not as NGOs.

### **1.5 Thesis Outline**

The aims of this thesis are twofold. I seek to understand the appropriateness of EU policy in the Turkish context and the variety of ways in which actors engage in the processes that surround EU funding for NGOs. In the slipstream of the main research question, I argue that EU civil society funding leads to uncertain processes of Europeanisation because the interaction between EU policy and the Turkish context

generates a variety of reactions from the NGOs. Furthermore, these aims are pursued through the research sub-questions, which look at the role of frameworks of support offered by the EU, the Turkish political context, and the reactions of NGOs to EU funding policy. Following the introductory comments made in this chapter (**Chapter One**), the rest of the thesis unfolds as follows.

**Chapter Two** visits the theories of civil society, outlining the main theoretical strands that help to explain not only the nature of civil society in Turkey, but also the current debates that form the basis of the logic behind EU policies towards civil society. The chapter seeks to determine whether Western theoretical frameworks remain relevant when explaining what is taking place in Turkey. This is an important part of the explanation because it sketches the theoretical outline for the EU policy intervention in Turkey. The two pieces of the puzzle – civil society in Turkey and EU civil society policy – arrive from different theoretical paths to understanding civil society, which leads to important questions regarding the efficacy of EU policy. In addition, the chapter discusses the possibility of bringing together Western civil society theory and existence of civil society in Muslim societies. The two are often deemed incompatible because in Muslim societies both the civil and the political are governed by religious ideas and this leaves little room for individuality, the cornerstone of Western thinking on civil society, to flourish. The chapter also reflects on the relevance of these theoretical thoughts on explaining the current Turkish context, and suggests that the way in which EU policy understands civil society differs from the reality on the ground in Turkey.

In order to fully understand EU policy, **Chapter Three** delves deeper into the logic and motivations behind the EU's interest in engaging with civil society actors in Turkey. The focus of the chapter is twofold, exploring both the way civil society is expected to contribute to the EU pre-accession process, and the reasons for these expectations to have emerged. By tracing through the chronology of policy documents that outline EU policy over the past 20 years, the chapter shows that the overall policy applied within the EU, in Turkey as well as in the broader Mediterranean stems from the same logic that reflects an instrumental understanding of the role of civil society (i.e. that it can be a vehicle for other policy goals), and a universal understanding of what is meant by civil society (i.e. that civil society is more or less the same despite the different cultural and historical context). Chapter Three also outlines the main

contours of the nature of the policy process through which NGO engagement is operationalised.

**Chapter Four** is based on a brief historical analysis of the evolution of Turkish civil society and points to the unique and idiosyncratic elements that manifest themselves in the Turkish context. The historical linkage between civil society and the political project of secularisation led to a bifurcation between the secular civil society that functioned as bulwark for the Turkish state, and the rest of civil society (representing, for example, religious and minority interests) that did not fit as comfortably within the secular mould. Since the 1980s the role of the state in civil society has been reduced drastically, and the “official” civil society previously occupied by secular functionaries has become inhabited by a colourful array of voices. Yet, aspects of these divisions are sustained by the vociferous debate that continues between elements of civil society, debate that is carried out in essentialist terms, making it very difficult to negotiate a compromise between the different views. The absence of compromises, in turn, has an impact on the ability of civil society to function as a resource for reconciliation and democratisation.

**Chapter Five** is the first of three empirical chapters that capture the findings of the field research for the thesis. This chapter delves deeper into the role of NGOs as policy advocates. The argument that NGOs can contribute to the processes of democratisation are largely premised on the ability of NGOs to effect changes in government policy. Additionally, by working together NGOs are able to build networks that persuade governments to amend their policies. A detailed look at NGO-government and NGO-NGO relations reveals that there appears to be a distinct gap between the EU policy rhetoric and how these relationships play out in practice. The local interests and concerns that govern these relationships are different in the Turkish context, leading to different strategies being adopted by the actors involved.

**Chapter Six** hones in on the nature of the funding environment in Turkish civil society. The chapter investigates the complementarity between the EU funding framework and the opportunities and shortcomings that actually exist within Turkish civil society. It also explores the kinds of funding choices NGOs make in this context. EU funding initiatives do address important areas of NGO work, such as advocacy, where domestic funding is rarely forthcoming. However, the complicated procedures that surround EU funding have meant that NGOs react in a number of different ways when faced with the opportunity to apply for EU funding. Some of these responses

clearly contest the assumptions EU policy makes about the nature of civil society and NGOs in Turkey.

The tensions between EU policy and the behaviour of Turkish NGOs are explored further in **Chapter Seven**. The chapter looks at the unanticipated outcomes that are generated by the policy process, and identifies four NGO roles that relate to such outcomes: translators, brokers, navigators and antagonists. The rigidity of the EU's project framework generates various different strategies among NGOs that contribute to the emergence of these roles. The main finding of this chapter relates to the unpredictability of social action, and the difficulties involved in setting out a programme of project activities that have particular outcomes attached to them.

**Chapter Eight** concludes by summarising the theoretical observations and key empirical findings that are drawn from this thesis, also commenting on the lessons that can be learnt about NGO engagement in donor-sponsored policy processes.

## 2 Civil Society Theory – its Application and Relevance

*‘Civil society’ sounds good; it has a good feel to it; it has the look of a fine old wine, full of depth and complexity. Who could possibly object to it, who not wish for its fulfilment? (Kumar 1993 p. 376)*

Civil society remains essentially a Western concept. Our understanding of it has been greatly influenced by the historical path civil society has taken in Western Europe and North America. What relevance, then, can it have in the context of Turkey, a country with a Muslim population and a past steeped in Islamic traditions and history? The chapter argues that Western conceptions of civil society do carry relevance, yet at the same time it is important to recognise the limits of how far it is possible to stretch the parallels between Western and Turkish civil society development. The purpose of this chapter is to delineate some of the central strands of thought that characterise Western civil society theory, describe how civil society has been applied to donor policy, and to consider the relevance of the theoretical and practical approaches in the Turkish context.

The chapter is structured in four parts. The first of these traces the ideas about civil society through the works of Adam Ferguson, Georg Hegel, Alexis de Tocqueville and Antonio Gramsci. The purpose here is to identify a historical parallel between the idea of civil society and the development of modern societies through industrialisation and democratisation. Next, the chapter turns to how these theoretical positions play out in the donor efforts to operationalise civil society development in programmes elsewhere. Donors’ tendency to simplify the economic and democratic arguments in favour of civil society is problematised, as such treatment interprets civil society as inherently positive and devoid of politics. In the third section the chapter shifts its attention to the debate on existence of civil society in non-Western contexts. Can a Muslim society, with its emphasis on the collective interest of the community at the expense of individual rights, ever sustain civil society premised on pluralism and individual liberty? The fourth section considers the case of Turkey, where all of the above debates intersect, and suggests some preliminary conclusions as to how Europeanisation processes may manifest themselves in the unique context of Turkey.

## 2.1 Ideas about civil society: the fantastic four

The way civil society is understood today begins its journey from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Up until then the concept was regarded as coterminous with the state. As Kumar observes, whether Cicero's *societas civilis*, Aristotle's *koinonia politike* or Kant's *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, the essence of the term indicates a social development to a stage where society is "civilized" (Kumar 1993 p. 377). It was only later that state and civil society were considered as separate entities, beginning with Adam Ferguson in 1767 (Keane 1988).

This modern concept of civil society was largely a product of the era of industrialisation and the development of modern societies. A result of these economic times, civil society was part and parcel of a vision that emphasised a particular mix of pluralism and individualism as the key ingredients for modern civilization. Previously, the reign of absolute monarchies in Europe had ensured that power was heavily centralised. The emergence of modern commercial relations offered a new sense of independence from the state, where a constant tug-of-war between the general (public) and particular (private) interests generated a delicate balance between the individual and the communal, searching for a state where the two were able to coexist. Additionally this allowed the development of alternative sites of power to the European monarchies. Such ideas are presented in the writings of Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) and Georg Hegel (1770-1831), for example. Civil society that is independent of the state has also been viewed as a crucial building block of a democratic state. Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) in particular offered us such an insight from his observations on the characteristics of American society. This logic, however, despite its popularity among many present-day policymakers, may not offer access to any universal truths about the nature of society, but rather allude to the prevalence of a certain set of values and beliefs that have asserted their hegemony in Western societies. This alternate interpretation emerges from the writings of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), who, for example, questions the "unquestionability" of the capitalist system.

### *Adam Ferguson*

Two important points about the nature of civil society are raised in Adam Ferguson's "Essay on the History of Civil Society" (1995). First, civil society is intricately intertwined with the institutions of modern commercial economy. Ferguson in fact

treats it as a by-product of modern division of labour. Second, civil society can protect modern society from the negative social consequences of these modern forms of production. Both of these observations are relevant to our thinking of civil society today. Written in 1767, nine years prior to the publication of Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations", Ferguson's thoughts are bound by similar ideas of a modern commercial economy and its impact on societal relations. Ferguson worries that the modern division of labour will cause a loss of public spirit. Through the division of labour, society begins to resemble a complex machine where each individual has an increasingly specialised role. In this context, individuals become detached from the communal spirit, blinkered by the narrow roles they are asked to fulfil. Public spiritedness is replaced with self-serving goals and by greed and avarice, leading to the corruption of societal values. Personal advancement becomes a priority, superseding the concern for others as well as for public spirit. Therefore, Ferguson claims that "the separation of professions, while it seems to promise improvement of skill...serves, in some measure, to break the bands of society" (1995 p. 12). As these bands are broken and communal interests wither away, the subsequent corruption of public life paves the way for political despotism. This is another of Ferguson's main concerns (Keane 1988 p. 42). The evolution of modern civil society, given its strong association with modern commercial relations can easily lead to public disregard for anything but self-interest, and thus prepare the ground for a despotic state to emerge.

On the other hand, Ferguson speaks very highly of our ability to be public spirited. He in fact sees communal solidarity stemming from a "shared sense of sociability", rather than from respect for individual rights (Hann and Dunn 1996 p. 4). As much as we are selfish, we are also highly social animals and flourish by maintaining active social relations:

The disposition of men, and consequently their occupations, are commonly divided into two principal classes; the selfish, and the social. The first are indulged in solitude; and if they carry a reference to mankind, it is that of emulation, competition and enmity. The second incline us to live with our fellow-creatures, and to do them good; they tend to unite the members of society together (Ferguson 1995 p. 51).

It is therefore in our nature to interact with others in society as much as it is to withdraw from public life as a consequence of the division of labour. These two tendencies coexist in a modern civil society. We are not governed by our selfish



interests alone, but by a more complex set of social interactions based on the ethical and moral values that bind us to a particular community. Ferguson calls for these social values to play a larger part in the conduct of our lives and in this way to curb the negative side effects of the division of labour:

It should seem, therefore, to be the happiness of man, to make his social dispositions the ruling spring of his occupations; to state himself as the member of a community, for whose general good his heart may glow with an ardent zeal to the suppression of those personal cares which are the foundation of painful anxieties, fear, jealousy, envy (1995 p. 51).

Ferguson's essay reflects an effort to make sense of a changing society. It reflects a concern over the social impact of modern economic structures and makes a case for considering civil society as the "social glue" that can prevent the disintegration of society. Such concerns and observations echo not only among other theorists on the subject but, as will be argued later in the chapter, also among present day policymakers.

### *Georg Hegel*

Hegel's work on civil society links with Ferguson in its effort to reconcile the tension between public and private interests. His writings took a significant stride towards consolidating the idea of civil society as an entity separate from the state (this being the crucial difference from the ancient Greek understanding of the concept). Following in the footsteps of the Scottish enlightenment (he was born three years after Ferguson published his essay), Hegel applied the pioneering idea of a market that was independent of the state and treated the behaviour of individuals outside the market in similar fashion. Civil society, for Hegel, was thus a "set of social practices which are constituted by the logic of the market" (Chandhoke 1995 p. 117).

Consequently, Hegel argued that individuals' particular needs and wants govern their behaviour in civil society. This was the first principle of civil society he put forward (Hegel 1952 § 182). Self-seeking individuals aiming to fulfil their private needs are the building blocks of civil society. However, if our primary instinct is to have our own needs fulfilled, with complete disregard for the needs of others, our society would not survive. 'Particularity by itself...destroys itself' (Hegel 1952 § 185). Thus, it is the second principle of civil society that aims to mediate this destructive

tendency. Universality represents the conventions and customs of a given society that form constraints on what is regarded as acceptable behaviour. The attainment of personal interest is mediated by the universal, and this process of mediation becomes the means to realise private interests. This is how the innate tendency of civil society to pursue self-seeking ends is being kept in check – through the interplay between particular and universal:

[...] in the course of the actual attainment of selfish ends – an attainment conditioned in this way by universality – there is formed a system of complete interdependence, wherein the livelihood, happiness, and legal status of one man is interwoven with the livelihood, happiness, and rights of all. On this system, individual happiness, &co., depend, and only in this connected system are they actualized and secured. This system may be *prima facie* regarded as the external state, the state based on need (Hegel 1952 § 183).

Despite the structural similarities in their arguments, Hegel appears more cynical in his assessment than Ferguson. He does not believe that people are innately public-spirited, rather that we are coaxed to cooperate because this ensures that a broader set of our needs and interests will be met. There is a constant ebb and flow being played out between the particular/individual and the universal/public interests that needs somehow to be controlled. For Hegel, the state constitutes the highest form of ethical life, which is why public authorities have the responsibility of ensuring that universal needs are not overshadowed by the particular, self-seeking demands of individuals (Hegel 1952 § 188). In this sense Hegel considers these institutions as part of civil society because their primary role is to regulate the exchanges that take place within civil society (Chandhoke 1995 p. 126). By enforcing a set of laws, the administration of justice and the police can ensure that each person's right to property is respected and recognised. This helps to mediate each individual's innate predisposition to seek others' property.

In addition, the particularity of civil society is kept in check by the formation of corporations. The purpose of a corporation is to bring together members of the business class (Hegel 1952 § 250), who share a certain skill or trade and that constitutes "a second family for its members" ( § 252). Although corporations derive from the self-seeking motives of the individuals, they are structured around common interests that are shared by members. It thus forms a type of intermediate universality,

as particular individual interests become the shared interests of the corporation ( § 251). Corporations are the organisational pillars of civil society that offer it structure. They juxtapose aspects of particularity and universality, generating a sense of solidarity that convinces “the individual that his salvation lies in associating with others” (Chandhoke 1995 p. 128). There is thus an organisational aspect to Hegel’s thinking about civil society, but this does not yet extend beyond commercially motivated organisations.

Hegel’s writing on civil society also emphasises the vulnerability, fragility and contingent nature of civil society. As John Keane has pointed out, Hegel does not treat civil society as a naturally existing phenomenon, but rather as a product of a particular historical process (Keane 1998). For Hegel, civil society emerged from the idiosyncrasies of the modern commercial system as it evolved in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. How civil society evolves in another context is therefore contingent on the way the system of needs negotiates a balance between the different interest groups that exist. There is no blueprint, or at least the European experience offers no such thing. This leads to a second observation: civil society is transient and “wreckable” (Keane 1998 p. 50; 1988 p. 50), for “civil society is the battlefield where everyone’s individual private interests meets everyone else’s” (Hegel 1952 § 289). The intentions of individuals that inhabit the civil societal space are not inherently good. The delicate character of civil society means that its development and growth is not in any way pre-determined.

One is compelled to put forward one further argument: when taking stock of the notion of universality in Hegel’s writings on civil society, it is advisable not to attach any specific cultural, ethical or moral values to it. Universality should stand simply for an aggregate, a compromise of the totality of different interests that exist in society. If we were to consider the universal to refer to a particular ethical or moral worldview that has become synonymous with the dominant culture, this would be likely to push away a certain subset of particular interests. No group in society, including the mediating public authorities, should therefore claim hegemony over what is meant by universal; it should remain more abstract than this. Universality defined on the bases of dominant ethical or moral values would exclude certain individual interests not adhering to these values. It is likely that such individuals would either withdraw from public life or attempt to redefine universal values to correspond with their own set of values. To borrow from the earlier quotation from Hegel, society

would no longer strive for “complete interdependence” and the interests of one man would no longer be “the livelihood, happiness, and rights of all”, but merely for the interests of some.

So far, in looking at Ferguson’s and Hegel’s ideas on civil society, much of the focus has been on the interplay of economic dynamics and civil society. Civil society brings together the self-interested, economic logic of citizens with their desire to remain social animals. Through the arrangements within civil society it is possible to find a balance between the self-centred market and our public-spiritedness. Both are thus concerned with how to ensure that the two tug-of-war teams are equally manned, leading to a draw.

### *Alexis de Tocqueville*

More recently, it has become commonplace to treat civil society as a key ingredient of democracy. Whilst Ferguson and Hegel may not have offered many suggestions as to why this might be the case, de Tocqueville’s book *Democracy in America*, published in 1832, makes a persuasive case for civil society as a bulwark against despotism (1998). In so doing, de Tocqueville develops further the separation of state and civil society proposed by Hegel. High levels of associationalism provide citizens with a way to resist the power of the state and in so doing protect the democratic majority from the whims of the ruling minority.

De Tocqueville was particularly concerned with the consequences of equality of conditions (in terms of income), which, if left unattended would increase the threat of despotism. As the equality of social conditions becomes increasingly prevalent, he argued, the citizens will become less dependent on their community for support. They will be able to reach satisfactory educational standards and acquire sufficient material possessions to satisfy their own needs. Such citizens will have a reduced interest in the affairs of the community, becoming socially less active and withdrawing from a role in the administration of local affairs (de Tocqueville 1998 p. 206). The emerging gap in local administration will be filled by the central government. Over time the accumulation of power in the hands of the central government will lead to the development of a despotic state. It was as an answer to this dilemma of a despotic state by stealth that de Tocqueville introduced the role of local associations. These should be given responsibility over local affairs, which bear relevance to the everyday welfare of the community and are thus likely to engage and interest citizens.

...more may be done by entrusting to the citizens the administration of minor affairs [...] interesting them in the public welfare and convincing them that they constantly stand in need of one another (de Tocqueville 1998 p. 212).

The enthusiasm for establishing local associations was one characteristic of the American society that struck a chord with de Tocqueville. He saw an added value in freely formed associations. These would not only protect against individualism and despotic government, but provided a way for citizens to take initiative and organise themselves around issues they felt were important. De Tocqueville noticed that it would be possible to exert considerable influence through such associations:

As soon as several of the inhabitants of the United States have taken up an opinion or a feeling which they wish to promote in the world, they look out for mutual assistance; and as soon as they have found one another out, they combine. From that moment they are no longer isolated men, but a power seen from afar, whose actions serve for an example and whose language is listened to (de Tocqueville 1998 p. 218).

These associational activities emerge organically from the actions of citizens and serve to influence government decision-making, leading de Tocqueville to consider this kind of proactive self-organisation as a sign of a civilised nation (de Tocqueville 1998 p. 219). Associations have the ability to remedy the individualistic tendencies that the increased equality of conditions brings about. In order to protect democracy, therefore, the number of associations should increase in parallel with rising equality.

De Tocqueville's observations make two structural comments about civil society that continue to have relevance. He first draws a line between state and civil society; the latter has not been designed purely to serve the former. Civil society forms from the local interests and opinions that collective organisations then communicate to the relevant state institutions. Second, in order for civil society to successfully counterbalance the state, the local interests need to be channelled into collective forms of organisation. This can be seen as extending the role of Hegel's corporations located in the economic realm to the realm of politics in the form of citizen organisations. These ideas in particular have been of interest to the neo-Tocquevillean school of scholars and to policymakers in particular, point discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

*Antonio Gramsci*

Although Gramsci's starting point for explaining the relationship between state and civil society is not too dissimilar from de Tocqueville's, his conclusions are starkly different. In fact, Gramsci has been called the "Marxist de Tocqueville", for his analysis also begins from the structural separation of state and civil society (Kumar 1993 p. 377). For Gramsci, however, the separation of state and civil society was not quite so clear-cut as for de Tocqueville, and thus civil society was not necessarily pictured as a counterpoint to the state. As civil society could protect society from the state it could also be an accomplice in retaining the hegemony and power of a tyrannical state. There is no inherent relationship between the size of civil society and the health of democracy.

The motivation for Gramsci's work on civil society came largely from a desire to understand why the Communists in the 1920s and 1930s in Italy failed to execute the revolution. His conclusion was that they had made a mistake in focusing their efforts on capturing the state because this would not capture power (Simon 1991; Jones 2006). Instead, Gramsci argued, they should have focused on capturing people's minds and gain their consent through civil society, and thus create a counterhegemony that can truly challenge the hegemony of the state. In constructing his theory, Gramsci therefore saw an intricate web of relations existing between civil society and the state.

In the East the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed (1995 p. 238).

The role of civil society was not, as de Tocqueville depicted it, to protect society from a despotic state. It was rather the opposite: to protect the state from society. As Gramsci explains:

What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural "levels"; the one that can be called "civil society", that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called "private", and that of "political society" or "the State". These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of "direct domination" or command exercised through the State and "juridical" government (1995 p. 12).

It was the interplay between civil society and political society that formed the tentacles of power in society. In describing the dynamics of this relationship Gramsci spoke of a “war of position”, using the metaphor of civil society as the trenches of warfare.

These would help the enemy to resist the attack launched on it: “the attack seemed to have destroyed the enemy’s entire defensive system, whereas in fact it has only destroyed the outer perimeter” (Gramsci 2006 p. 74). Here Gramsci was referring to the ineffectiveness of an attack aimed at the state alone because the trenches of civil society would still ensure that the defensive line would hold.

Even though for Gramsci the main concern was how to launch a successful revolution against the capitalist state, his analysis of state and civil society yields some useful insights beyond the revolutionary context. According to Gramsci, civil society is neither a sphere of freedom nor a source of democracy, but instead a sphere of hegemony. This is the avenue that the ruling classes use to exert and retain their power through nonviolent means. By controlling the production of ideas within civil society, the state elite with the support of the bourgeoisie was able to manufacture consent for the current state of affairs. Gramsci’s answer was a counterhegemonic struggle through civil society that would problematise the dominant ideas and offer new ideas in their stead, and by so doing capture the minds and consent of the people. Gramsci’s work questions the extent to which civil society remains an enabling concept.

Where Gramsci’s view of civil society is distinctly different from Hegel and de Tocqueville is in the concept of hegemony; whilst state and civil society remain structurally apart, at the level of ideology they are intricately connected. Whereas Hegel saw the state as the ultimate arbiter, protecting universalism and regulating individual, conflicting interests, Gramsci understood the state as being politically interested rather than neutral. De Tocqueville feared the tyranny of the state whilst Gramsci saw the state in class terms, as a method of control.

### *Sub-conclusion*

The idea of civil society pursued here traced two central developments in political thought since the 18<sup>th</sup> century that crystallise how state-civil society relations are understood today. The first was the development of a modern market economy and a diverse commercial society that established its independence from the state. Out of this grew civil society, as, through the division of labour society was re-organised in

smaller subunits, such as Hegel's corporations. Civil society had an additional benefit as it was perceived to be a key remedy to the ailments of greed and self-interest that came part and parcel of economic progress, which were deemed potentially detrimental to social stability and cohesion by Ferguson, Hegel and de Tocqueville.

The second development, which features most distinctly in the works of de Tocqueville and Gramsci, relates to the structural separation of state and civil society. For Ferguson and Hegel this distinction was more blurred – evident, for example, in how Hegel failed to make a distinction between civil society and the public authorities that were to be in control of it. For de Tocqueville the key feature of civil society was its ability to hold the state to account. By offering a way for different groups to voice their concerns, whether against or in support of government policy, his ideas paved the way for seeing civil society as an integral part of democracy and democratisation. Whilst Gramsci identified the structural relationship between state and civil society in a similar manner, he went on to draw rather different conclusions. His observations highlighted the tendency for state and civil society to collude in establishing an ideological hegemony. The structural separation was overshadowed by the ideological connection, and any real change would therefore be dependent on the support of civil society.

After Gramsci the concept of civil society fell gradually into disuse both in the academic world as well as in politics. In the late 1980s East European dissident activists revitalised the concept, looking at the historical roots of civil society and refashioning these in their contemporary, counterhegemonic political discourse. This intellectual pursuit was joined by Western academics who fleshed out the theoretical underpinnings for a modern-day reformulation of civil society.<sup>15</sup> This debate remains contested and continues to be appropriated for different ideological purposes, particular by actors on left and right of the political spectrum. The liberal democratic model of civil society, which emphasises the separation of civil society from the state and the links between civil society and democratisation, predominates the political, policy and academic discourse on the subject. These views are contrasted by the more critical perspectives drawing on Gramsci and contemporary anthropological perspectives that highlight civil society as a site of hegemony and struggle, or as a highly contextual site of associationalism.

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the contributions found in Keane (1988)



What implications does the above discussion have in the context of EU funding for NGOs in Turkey? The view that civil society is a consequence of economic modernisation processes, together with a belief in the democratising effect of active civil society resonate strongly with the liberal democratic model of development. The writings on civil society described above stem from thinking about social change – civil society has been described both as a consequence of change and in itself an agent of change. Both views paint an image where an intervention that aims for social change is likely to affect civil society, either as the recipient or the means of change. Furthermore, as the following section aims to demonstrate, the current thinking about civil society among Western donors tends to make a conceptual leap from theories of civil society that originate from particular Western historical experiences, to considering them universally applicable. This is problematic because the Western experience of civil society, as it has been expounded by the authors discussed here, ends up being understood as the right, or even only way of doing things, when in fact it is merely one among many ways.

## **2.2 Donors and civil society**

The role of civil society has become reflected in donor policies, which now consider civil society as an important constituent of both democratic and economic development. Whilst these two considerations are relevant to international donors all over the world, the particular narrative of civil society as a third sector is highly relevant to how civil society is viewed in the context of EU enlargement policy. The work of Robert Putnam, a neo-Tocquevillean scholar par excellence, paves the way to explaining how the economic and democratic arguments in favour of civil societal development have been made by donor institutions like the EU.

### *Democratic development*

Putnam makes a persuasive case for considering civil society organisations as an integral part of democracy. CSOs have an external impact on democracy through the demands they make on government by advocating for a particular cause. Internally, within civil society this type of activity fosters “habits of cooperation and public-spiritedness” that develop the civil skills required for participation in public life and “inculcates democratic habits” (Putnam 2000 p. 212). Social capital is a key ingredient in the development of such democratic habits. Putnam’s work continues the

Tocquevillean tradition of connecting a vibrant civil society with a well-functioning democracy. In this view, civil society is taken as a given good, and it is taken for granted that a civil society under the auspices of the state forms the best social and political framework available. From the point of view of international donor agencies, directing support to civil society organisations has become an integral part of any democracy building strategy. The core strategy has had three components: support for elections, state institutions and civil society. This support has aspired towards an ideal type of civil society that entails not only broader citizen involvement, but an ability to articulate the interests of citizens so as to hold the government accountable (Carothers 1999 p. 86; Mitlin 2004 p. 4). In practice, this type of organisational support has largely focused on “NGO building” – supporting NGOs that work on public interest advocacy, human rights and women’s rights in particular.

Western donor agencies have thus actively engaged with civil society strengthening programmes in the belief that there is an integral relationship between civil society and democracy. Drawing on the conclusion of the neo-Tocquevillean school, donors felt that by offering technical and financial assistance to NGOs, it would be possible to build democracy (Ishkanian 2008 p. 5). Civil society was romanticised, and particularly in the American policy circles regarded as the quintessential element of democracy promotion, a view which in the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world has become increasingly influential (Ishkanian 2008 p. 6). The dominance of the American view on the relationship between civil society and democracy in the donor circles has led to what has been termed the “Americanization of the debate” (Carothers 1999; Howell and Pearce 2001b). The role of CSOs as it is understood in the Western context and from a neo-Tocquevillean point of view has dominated the way in which donors have opted to engage in civil society development in third countries.

The case of the Middle East offers a useful example of how economic and democratic motivations behind civil society initiatives link seamlessly. Both American and European efforts of promoting democracy were incorporated in the broader context of the war on terrorism (Carothers 2004 p. 7). Thomas Carothers has described the American donor strategy which has unfolded as threefold in nature, focusing on economic reform as well as indirect and direct democracy promotion (2004 pp. 241-7). The economics-first approach believes in the transformative power of economic development, where an independent and pluralist private sector will help the growth of

an independent middle class. This will in turn bolster support for and independence of civil society. Indirect support for democracy in turn focuses on promoting good governance and strengthening civil society. The aim is not to tackle the deeper political issues, but to provide a framework within which the political context that prevents democratisation from taking place could be resolved. In order to improve governance, these programmes have focused on judicial reform, anticorruption and decentralisation giving more power to local governments. Civil society has been strengthened by channelling support to advocacy groups working on human rights, women's rights, environment and anticorruption initiatives. Direct promotion of democracy focuses on the political party system and elections, ensuring a pluralist party base, free and fair elections and educating citizens about the process of democratic elections. These examples illustrate the liberal democratic ideas that form the basis of Western donor policy.

#### *Civil society as a third sector*

In the domestic context of USA and Europe, a strong case has been made for encouraging greater civil society participation in the policymaking process and service delivery as a means to improve government effectiveness. Putnam, in his book *Making Democracy Work* puts forth an argument that associational networks have a direct effect on government performance (Putnam et al. 1994). In this study of Italy's regions, identical regional governments displayed higher levels of effectiveness where civic engagement was stronger. Voter turnout, newspaper readership, membership in choral societies and football clubs were among indicators of civic engagement (Putnam et al. 1994; Putnam 1995). It is the quality of this civic community that determines the quality of democracy, Putnam argues.

In the early 1970s, Amitai Etzioni discussed his vision for a third sector in a seminal article on the subject. He argued that a third alternative had been added to the traditional debate over how to serve our needs. In addition to public and private options, the third sector could offer a new alternative (but not replace the already existing options). Thus, a "method must be developed to combine the 'best of both worlds' – efficiency and expertise from the business world with public interest, accountability and broader planning from government" (Etzioni 1973 p. 315). In similar fashion, Lester Salamon in the 1980s pushed welfare state theory to move beyond explanations that were limited by the "market failure-government failure"

theory. Focusing on the case of the United States, he called for a much more serious consideration of the role the voluntary sector already played in the provision of government services and how the voluntary sector was proving to be a great help in the development of government policy. Salamon termed this “third party government” (Salamon 1981, 1987).

It is this role envisaged for civil society today, interweaving with government policy and service delivery, that is captured by the term third sector. Like civil society, the term third sector is used to describe the space outside of the state and the market. It has an intermediary role between the public and private sectors, balancing the political interests of the public sector with the economic interests of the private (Anheier and Seibel 1989 p. 9). From a policy point of view, the benefit of greater civil society – or third sector – involvement in policy implementation is in finding a happy medium between social and political integration and economic development (1989 p.10).

For example, in the United Kingdom the third way rhetoric of former Prime Minister Tony Blair and the New Labour party stems from a similar intellectual base. Anthony Giddens’ book *The Third Way* is an attempt to capture the policy implications of this rhetoric and to put some theoretical flesh around the skeleton of policymaking that began to emerge (1998). According to Giddens, the absolute faith in the free market represented by the conservative political leadership in Britain was unwise; what was needed instead was a system that combines the best of the public and private sectors. The role of the state here is to coordinate, or steer the individual and communal efforts to pursue a better quality of life. The third way attempts to fuse individual liberty with social justice. The choice that is presented to citizens is not a simple one between a state managed economy and a free market because a multitude of intermediary agencies located in civil society (individuals, social groups, voluntary sector) are envisaged to work in partnership with public and private sectors. The third way is committed to both individual responsibility and the development of a community. The debate on civil society and the third sector was grafted onto the third way rhetoric through earlier experiences in the realm of international development. In the run-up to the national elections in the UK in 2010, the concept of the third sector has taken on an important role in the political debate in both of the leading parties, the Conservatives and the Labour Party. “Small government, big society” was the recently evoked new slogan by the Conservative leader and current Prime Minister, David

Cameron, conjured up in response to the increasing importance of civil society and third sector in British politics.<sup>16</sup>

The role of civil society is not viewed purely as potential service-deliverers. Civil society is believed to have a political role to play as well. This two-pronged approach is evident in the actions of the previous UK government, as it on the one hand established the “Office of the Third Sector”<sup>17</sup> to explore the service-delivery potential of civil society, whilst on the other hand devising a policy on “Community Partnerships” that aimed to give greater decision-making powers to local civil society groups over issues concerning local communities (Communities and Local Government 2008). Civil society, therefore, has a both a policy role and a political role to play. The ideas that inform third way thinking have also had an important impact on the approach the EU together with other European governments take in their relationship with civil society. The EU policy approach presented next demonstrates a similarly nuanced understanding of the third sector.

#### *The European Union and civil society*

The European vision of how to strengthen civil society combines these two strategies that encourage the role of civil society in the development of democracy and as a third sector. The debate among international donor agencies on civil society has been largely Americanised, and civil society-related activities are most often motivated by its perceived impact on democratisation. At the same time the EU policy framework sees CSOs as useful partners in ensuring that policies are effective: they can be consulted on best practices, and they can also become helpful partners at the delivery end of services. This is particularly relevant to EU enlargement policy and how civil society is engaged in this context. The discussion here is intended as a preamble to the next chapter where EU policy objectives on civil society are described in greater length.

This kind of incorporation of civil society-related activities within broader policy frameworks is not entirely unproblematic, however. Stephen Hurt, in a discussion on civil society and EU development policy problematises the EU vision

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<sup>16</sup> Speech by David Cameron “Our Big Society Plan”, presented at a Conference on the Big Society, London, March 31, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, in the aftermath of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat election victory in June 2010, the Office of the Third Sector has been renamed as the ‘Office for Civil Society’. It is, however, too soon to discuss any policy changes that this renaming may reflect.

from a neo-Gramscian point of view (Hurt 2003). We should remain more critical of civil society because the current policy is guided by specific ideas about what civil society should look like in the recipient countries. The consensus that has been reached represents a hegemony of the donor ideas, as the values espoused by EU development policy are regarded as the baseline, or common sense position. Hurt argues that EU actions are quietly transforming civil society in third countries to reflect its own image. If the EU were to support civil society uncritically, they would also encourage voices that are critical of the values and opinions the EU represents. In order to make sure that the strengthened civil society complements rather than contradicts the EU approach, the support for civil society has to be limited and strategic. To this end, since partner organisations are selected on the basis of their compatibility with the EU mission, they are likely to serve to legitimise the EU idea of what civil society ought to be like.

These arguments echo similar observations elsewhere that have been made with regard to other international donor agencies. Several observers have argued that donor discourses, in their apparent neutrality, disguise ideological hegemonies and values (Howell and Pearce 2001b; Ottaway and Carothers 2000; Carothers 1997; Mercer 2003). Donors, reflecting on their understanding of civil society as an actor in the three-way partnership with the state and the market, select CSOs that are able to manage such relationships. The subsequent tendency to define civil society as a list of organisations tends to hide away the ruggedness of civil societal relations that exists in reality (Howell and Pearce 2001b). The desire by the EU to view civil society as a third sector over-emphasises the role of those organisations in civil society that can participate in third sector-like activities. The conflictual relationships between CSOs are swept under the carpet, placing this darker side of civil society out of sight.

There is a prevailing tendency to depoliticise civil society in donor policies on the subject (Howell and Pearce 2001b; cf. Ferguson 1990). The entire concept of the third sector is a reflection of an effort to tidy up the concept of civil society as something that slots in neatly within policy frameworks, and that performs a neutral role as a partner in government-led policy processes. Civil society becomes sanitised and drained of political content. The further away we move from the European context, the less realistic such a scenario becomes, and the gap between policy aspirations and reality on the ground grows. The concerns raised by Hurt and other critics of donor policy are in part accurate, as it is highly plausible that were such a gap to exist it would be donor policy that would prevail over local context. The central

argument of this thesis, however, suggests that a much more complex equation is required, that offers a more nuanced appreciation of the way local agents react in the face of external policy frameworks. Processes of Europeanisation are not smooth, as suggested by Hurt, but rugged, reflecting the reality of civil society.

### *Sub-conclusion*

The strategies for engaging with civil society point towards a liberal understanding of how society is organised. The engagement is motivated by a desire to expand the ability of individuals to make independent decisions about their lives, both in economic and political terms. Civil society offers the means to do this.

The underlying tendency is to view civil society as always making a positive contribution; the more groups there are the better. The way in which donors conceive of civil society either as contributing towards policy effectiveness or democratisation has meant that often only a narrow band of NGOs registers on the donors' radar. This approach ignores not only the diversity of organisations in civil society but also the myriad of other motivations for CSOs to do their work. These organisations can represent different political ideologies and struggle against each other as well as against the state. The donor approach will create winners and losers among the local CSOs and bring up new sources of contention and competition, particularly where the culture represented by the donor agencies is strikingly different. The next two sections consider further the importance of context, where the discussion shifts to reflect on the challenges that the Turkish case presents in light of the theoretical positions on civil society presented thus far.

## **2.3 Muslim civil society**

The placement of moral and ethical values within the realm of government is possibly the most important characteristic of Islam that make many regard it unable to accommodate democracy. The liberal democratic point of view would not allow for the government to impose a particular set of values (moral, religious) upon its citizens because this would infringe on their rights as individuals. Hegel, agreeing with the liberal democratic perspective, saw the state as a source of neutral rationality that enabled it to arbitrate between different particular interests in society. Gramsci in contrast viewed the state through a Marxist lens, and pointed to the façade of neutrality

that the capitalist state was able to maintain, with the support of civil society. Is it, therefore, possible to say that such an approach to governance and political life, which emphasises liberal individualistic values instead, is universally applicable? Or should government, as Michael Sandel has argued, remain neutral and resist the temptation to support any specific interpretation of good life, and refrain from legislating morality (1996)?

On one side of the debate lies an argument that criticises liberal individualism for its degenerative impact on social solidarity and for its lack of relevance in societies where social identity is derived from a particular cultural or communal source. It is more appropriate, therefore, to see individuals as embedded in particular communities recognise differences and support the interdependence of groups (Young 1993). On the other side of the debate we find an argument that criticises Islam for its tendency to smother individualism, for prioritising group rights at the expense of individual rights. Because of this, Muslim societies are deemed unable to sustain a genuine civil society, or democracy.

*Why does civil society not exist in Muslim countries?*

Islam is the blueprint of a social order. It holds that a set of rules exist, external, divinely ordained, and independent of the will of men, which defines the proper ordering of society (Gellner 1981 p. 1).

These opening lines of Ernest Gellner's *Muslim Society* allude to what is at the core of the debate over the existence of Muslim civil society. Gellner argues that in Islam both the civil and the political are governed by religious tenets leaving no room for individuality to flourish. Christianity, in contrast, relinquished aspirations for political power from the outset, and in particular since the Protestant Reformation (1517-1579) and the gradual secularisation of European societies that followed. The separation of religion and politics in this way has significantly contributed to the emergence of the secular state in the Christian world. This is much more difficult to achieve in Islam because religious law remains the guiding principle for both politics and society. The *umma*, the overarching community of all Muslims, prevails over the individual. The focus remains on group rights, not on individual rights (Kazemi 2002 p. 232).



The benefits of the existence of these individual structures in society are spelled out in more detail by Gellner's idea of a "modular man". According to Gellner, a modular man is one who:

[...] can combine into specific-purpose, *ad hoc*, limited associations, without binding himself by some blood ritual. He can leave an association when he comes to disagree with its policy without being open to the charge of treason. [...] *This* is civil society: the forging of links which are effective even though they are flexible, specific, instrumental (Gellner 1994 p. 42).

The conditions within a Muslim society make the emergence of a modular man difficult and unlikely. Islam, argues Gellner, favours the traditional communal bonds at the expense of fostering the individualism of a modular man. Instead of opting for moving along with modernity and becoming modular, the tendency in Muslim countries has been to remain communalist and resist bonds that exist outside kinship and religion. It is not by choice that Muslims associate with others; rather, their community or religion prescribes it. This kind of associationalism lacks the "flexibility, specificity and instrumentality" that emerge in a modern, secular and pluralist civil society (Gellner 1995 pp. 98-102).

Şerif Mardin, a Turkish scholar, also argues that Muslim countries are inherently different, making emergence of civil society unlikely. He has famously described civil society as a "Western dream, a historical aspiration", which has become focused on human agency, on the "ability to dream the dream" (Mardin 1995 p. 278). The Muslim dream, on the other hand aspired for a "social equilibrium created under the aegis of a just prince" (1995 p. 285). This dream remains focused on social justice, and draws on a historical experiences in Muslim culture that continue to provide a blueprint for a civilized form of social life. This is the crucial difference Mardin sees between East and West. Whilst the notion of civility – the ethical (how individuals should behave) and moral (notions of right and wrong) tenets – translates into Islamic terms, civil society with its inferences to individualism, agency and freedom does not. Although Muslim states are gradually modernising and acquiring Western institutional characteristics, the dream remains different. It remains the business of the state to ensure that citizens adhere to the moral and ethical teachings of Islam (Moussali 1994).

At issue is the extent to which tolerance of the other is ingrained in the idea of civility. Farhad Kazemi notes, for example, that norms of exclusion tend to be more

frequent in Islam than in other religions. He cites women, religious minorities and lay intellectuals as examples of groups that tend to enjoy reduced citizenship rights or whose access to the public space is compromised. Despite the prevalence of civility, the concept of inclusion remains a potentially problematic area in Islam, he concludes (Kazemi 2002 p. 324). For some scholars, it is precisely in this area of tolerance that civil society can make a contribution in Muslim context. Civil society emerges as a potential proponent of social solidarity and as the pulse of an ethical life.

*Muslim civil society as “society with ethics”*

Perhaps the most elaborate and substantial critique of the universal claims behind the liberal democratic perspective comes from within the communitarian movement of political thought. It offers an alternative framework which places emphasis on local communal values, making the argument that ethical and moral beliefs found in a particular context must be the bases of any functioning political system (Walzer 1983; Sandel 1996; Etzioni 1973). Although the communitarian movement makes no specific reference to Islam, scholars exploring the nature of civil society in the Muslim world have found much common ground in these ideas.

The role of ethical and moral beliefs in society is a critical point of contention between the liberal view on civil society and an Islamic interpretation (Sajoo 2004). The liberal view wishes to push any role for moral and ethical concerns strictly to the private sphere. This position is based on a conviction that any restrictions on citizens’ freedom should be premised on upholding negative liberty (the absence of constraints that limit individual’s range of possible actions) and in so doing augment the plurality of goals that citizens are able to pursue. This stands in contrast to the role ethics and morals play in an Islamic public sphere. Ethics and morality should bear upon the types of goals that citizens and communities wish to pursue. The principles of social ethics ought to be discussed in, and by civil society. Barricading these away from the public sphere would contradict an Islamic worldview.

The members of the “communitarian movement” have been critical of the liberal point of view, aiming their arrows at the impact liberal individualism is having on social solidarity and active citizenship. Their concern is with the lack of traditional moral values, which ought to form the backbone of any vibrant civil society (Rawls 1972; Sandel 1996), critiquing the emphasis placed on economics and free market individualism by others (Hayek 1960; Nozick 1974). In response, there is a call for

heightened values of social trust and community building in order to rebuild social solidarity in the Western societies (Sajoo 2004 pp. 218-9).

As Iris Marion Young has argued, the ideal of liberal individualism tends to promote an assimilationist model that is unlikely to reflect people's experiences. Liberal individualism challenges the notion of difference that arises from group identity, and any discrimination that is based on group privileges. According to liberal individualism, therefore, citizens should be viewed only as individuals, not as members of groups (Young 1993). The trouble with such interpretation, observes Young, is that it ignores other more legitimate reasons for preserving group identities. As long as groups are not linked to oppression or exclusion of other groups, group identity can be an important element of how individual identity becomes embedded in the broader society. It is more sensible to consider individuals as part of a particular social context, defined by the community within which they live. Interdependence between groups is the means through which it is possible to create social cohesion, argues Young.

It is along the lines of the communitarian observers that the proponents of Muslim civil society perceive of the argument. Society with an ethical compass is seen as broadly beneficial in the Muslim context, particularly where properly functioning democratic institutions are lacking. In the absence of democracy, the incivility that may follow is ameliorated by the existence of ethical tenets that govern individuals' conduct in the public. For Sajoo, the content of such tenets does not have to differ between Islam and the West. The principles of "social solidarity, self-help and integrity" are recognised social values in both secular and Muslim public domains (2004 p. 234). Kamali has also pointed to the importance of social solidarity as a key condition for civil society to exist, arguing that it is not possible to reduce the theory of civil society to a simple political relationship between people and the state. Social solidarity offers a sense of belonging to a society (2001 p. 460). Seen this way, civil society in the Muslim context can offer the means to establish tenets of ethical life that are relevant to that context, and at the same time have many commonalities with Western values.

Others take a more simplified approach, arguing that there is nothing particularly special about the Muslim world. It operates much like the West, but with a time lag. Many of the Muslim countries are only now in the throes of modernisation, adapting to the modern socio-economic formations that are taking shape. This process

will create its own CSOs that will push for participatory forms of governance (Ibrahim 1998 p. 30). Through the process of modernisation and industrialisation Ibrahim identifies four factors that have contributed to the growth of civil society: growing unmet needs, growth in educated citizenry; growing individual financial resources and increased margins of freedom (1998 pp. 39-40). Ibrahim adopts a similar approach as Ferguson and Hegel have done, taking the commercial and social changes instigated by industrialisation as the starting point. Under these conditions CSOs are very likely to emerge, facing one of two possible outcomes. The autocratic regimes and Islamic activists may try to squeeze civil society out of the public arena altogether. Alternatively, the regime and the religious activists may attempt to appropriate or to win over civil society to their own cause (1998 p.51). It is this last scenario that for Ibrahim holds the greatest promise for civil societal development because it contains at least as much promise for further democratic development as there is against it.

Consequences of modernisation are often beyond the control of states and offer an example of how social and economic change can lead to various outcomes that question the uncompromising nature of Islamic political philosophy. Under the waves of modernisation, many choose to escape rural poverty, leave their traditional bonds of kinship and tribal loyalties behind, and move into cities, often congregating in shanty towns. In Iran, Islamist groups have given a voice to shanty dwellers and mobilised them in their cause (Kamali 2001 p. 471). Although in this case the activism that emerged reinforced existing, religious social norms, it offers evidence of the new windows of opportunity that modernisation creates for mobilising social forces in civil societal activity. Another consequence of modernisation is the emergence of the “moderate fundamentalist”, an Islamic activist with a vision to compromise. The moderate fundamentalist is open to dialogue, compromise and to the values of universal rights, freedom and civil society. The call for social justice found in a religious society is replaced by a demand for pluralism and tolerance of difference (Moussali 1994 p. 118). These kinds of developments question the immutability of Muslim society suggested by Gellner, and argue against treating Muslim societies as one homogenous group. There is much variation between Muslim societies across country contexts, an example of which is the different paths taken towards modernisation and economic development.

*Sub-conclusion*

Can civil society exist in a Muslim context? There is no simple answer to this question, but it seems that those arguing on opposite sides take a different view on what civil society means. Islam is not only a religion but also a political theory that provides the legitimate basis of political power. Thus, it is not possible to locate Islam purely in the public realm, for it will remain an energetic political force. The Western tradition of treating state and civil society as entirely separate, antagonistic entities does not seem appropriate. If this structural separation is at the heart of what is meant by civil society, then it will be more difficult to accept the existence of civil society in the Muslim context. However, if the search for civil society is focused on the values and modes of behaviour that civil society upholds – civility, social solidarity, social justice and public ethics as well as morals – then we may well conclude that there are good grounds for civil society to exist in the Muslim context. The rise of fascism in the West, for example, showed that the existence of a public space independent of the state is in itself no guarantee of democracy and tolerance. The nature of the values that civil society chooses to uphold is an equally important part of the equation for democracy. To this end, there are no reasons set in stone as to why Muslim societies could not open up to the values that support and encourage associationalism along lines that are both pluralist and tolerant.

These observations correspond awkwardly with the donor policies aiming at democratisation through civil society funding. It may be unhelpful, even counterproductive to promote external funding as developing civil society as a counterpoint to the state, when there is still a much stronger link between the two. The liberal individualistic logic that informs such policy is likely to gain less traction in a society where strong cultural group affinities continue to define individual identities as embedded in particular communities.

## **2.4 The relevance of civil society debates in the Turkish context**

The case of Turkey brings together the various strands of the above debate.<sup>18</sup> The donor ideas about civil society remain highly relevant because they explain how civil society is understood in the European context, a context to which Turkey is intricately

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<sup>18</sup> The analysis offered here is intended as a preamble to Chapter Four which is focused entirely on elaborating on the case of Turkey.

connected to by the EU pre-accession process. At the same time the debates on Muslim civil society resonate strongly with the ongoing debates over the role of religion in Turkish society. The juxtaposition of these various political and cultural elements leaves Turkey outside the stereotypes on either side. Given the unique context of Turkey, it is then important to consider the appropriateness of EU civil society policy that is grounded in visions of civil society as a third sector and in liberal democratic ideals about how civil society is expected to contribute to Europeanisation and democratisation processes. This continues as a common theme throughout the thesis, and the assessment begins here by considering the salient features of Turkey's political developments against the backdrop of EU actions as a donor organisation with a particular view of civil society.

Whilst Western ideas about civil society continue to remain acutely relevant to the Turkish case, it is important to consider how these may relate to the development of civil society in Turkey. Through its application for EU membership, Turkey has made its Western aspirations clear, and Western understanding of civil society is a relevant part of this commitment. The Turkish republic was founded, in 1923, on a series of Westernising reforms that have become a defining feature of its character. Creating a modern Turkish state from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire involved a break with the past, at least in terms of rhetoric. However, Turkish society had already been gripped by the question of how to synthesise Western and Eastern values in the Ottoman/Turkish melting pot (Parla 1985). These attempts at synthesis have in part taken place in civil society, and in so doing left their imprint on the character of Turkish civil society today. The values of a modern Western civilization that were adopted were imposed from above – as Kadioğlu poignantly describes it, the question was not one of “who are the Turks”, but rather “who are the Turks going to be” (Kadioğlu 1996 p. 177). Returning for a moment to Hegel's ideas of the interplay between the particular and universal - where the particular needs of individuals govern their actions, to be limited only by the rules that govern universality. In Turkey's case, the particular view of the reformers expanded into a new definition of universality that was based on a Turkish nationalist-republican vision of modernity (Seufert 2000). What was going to be regarded as appropriate behaviour in society was re-interpreted on the basis of the modernisers' agenda. The public authority in Turkey became a defender of a particular interpretation of what was meant by universal. The function of civil society, to evoke a Gramscian image, was to dig the protective trenches around

the state and to ensure the hegemony of the ideology of the elite. As the processes of state-building that preceded this did not resolve the underlying and competing private needs, the reforms merely brushed away a fire that, out of sight, continued to smoulder. As such, the adoption of Western values was selective and limited, and for decades civil society was smothered by the republican assimilationist ideas of Turkishness, allowed only to flourish in support of the state.

Gradually from the early 1980s onwards a much broader array of civil societal actors was allowed increasing scope to operate. In the aftermath of the 1980 military coup the military leadership looked to Islamic organisations in particular as potential allies in ensuring that support for Marxist and Fascist movements responsible for the significant social unrest that had led to the coup was going to be contained in future. Islamic groups, the green movement and the women's movement all began to gain greater freedom to operate. However, through these developments the smouldering, competing sets of interests that had been contained by a strong state saw the light of day. The groups representing these competing points of view found it difficult to tolerate each other and to engage in a rational debate (Keyman 1995). What has emerged from the increasingly autonomous civil society does not, therefore, resonate well with the de Tocquevillean reflection of civil society as a counterpoint of despotism. The various organisations are in competition with each other, and the nature of this competition is more a reflection of the Gramscian hegemonic versus counter-hegemonic struggles. The lack of tolerance can be at least partly explained by the unresolved nature of important social debates, such as the terms under which secularism and Islam can comfortably coexist in Turkey.

A key development in all of this has been the rise of the Islamic dimension of Turkish society since 1980. The normative, Western view of what makes civil society is based on the Western experience of modernisation and nation-building, and this does not comfortably align with the realities of a Muslim society. The neo-liberal values do not only clash with the values of a Muslim society, but also with the values of a communitarian understanding of the Western society that prioritises social solidarity and active citizenship. The arguments that challenge the existence of Muslim civil society are based on a neo-liberal understanding of civil society, and the universal relevance of this approach is contested both by Turkish context and by the communitarian point of view. By widening the scope of our understanding of civil society to include concepts such as social trust, social solidarity and community

building, it is possible to begin to see significant overlaps between Islamic and Western values. Both consist of individuals that join together as members of a society upholding certain universal ethical standards. The case of Turkey, a secular country with a Muslim population, therefore cuts straight to the heart of this debate surrounding the cultural relativity of civil society. Is it possible for Turkey to find a middle way among the overlaps that exist between secular and Islamic views of society with ethics?

### **2.5 Western concepts in non-Western contexts**

In reflecting on the usefulness of civil society as a concept in non-Western contexts, the distinctions drawn by David Lewis offer a helpful starting point (2001). First, there are many who advocate for a Western understanding of civil society to be universally accepted as the only idea of civil society that there is. This view is difficult to dismiss and will always remain relevant, if for no other reason than for the economic power it holds in the form of offering a premise for donor funding of civil society initiatives. In Turkey's case this relevance is compounded by the EU accession-related Europeanisation processes. The second point of view argues that civil society originates from a particular political and cultural pathway traversed in Europe, and has little meaning outside this context. The third view takes an adaptive approach, arguing that civil society does remain relevant, but it takes on different local meanings and it is therefore unhelpful if we try to conceptualise it too rigidly. Finally, Lewis offers the view that the whole question is "a wrong one to ask"; whether or not officially recognised, civil society has in fact been implicated in the local history of non-Western contexts for a long time. The relevance of civil society as a concept in a non-Western context is likely to hinge not on one, but on all four viewpoints. For example, in Turkey, the impact of a universal conception through donor funding and EU involvement is undeniable. Yet, it seems likely that aspects of the European understanding of civil society as a third sector bear less relevance to the case of present day Turkey, and similarly, there are aspects to Turkish civil society that exist only in that context. These different viewpoints remind us to push for a multidimensional understanding. In so doing, it suggests a strategy for how to understand the existence of civil society in non-Western contexts – as a hybrid where both domestic and external influences conflate in a new, locally relevant variant. The aim here is to



explore how a particular hybrid that has been influenced by the EU accession context, comes to being in Turkey.

It is therefore important to study how civil society gets translated in different political and cultural contexts. The dominant, universal notions of what civil society means are undoubtedly exported by donor practices, but exactly what kind of social and political impact this will have is undetermined. The usefulness of civil society as a concept depends less on abstract definitions than on ensuring that ideas are grounded in actual experiences (Glasius et al. 2004). Particular cultural ideas interact with the reputed universal relevance of civil society and influence how the concept is “manifested in practice, in everyday social behaviour” (Hann and Dunn 1996).

### *Strategies for exploring civil society on the ground*

To link the above observations that emphasise the importance of understanding the impact of local context and highlight the agency of local actors with European integration studies, the thesis takes “sociological institutionalism” as its starting point. This approach draws attention to the importance of actors’ subjective values that draw on sources such as norms, identity and culture (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006 p. 395). Such an approach is particularly relevant to the study of NGOs, as common values are an important bonding agent between organisational actors. The decisions NGOs make in terms of organisational change, for example, are not necessarily utility-maximising, rational calculations based on effectiveness. Instead, such decisions are reflective of broader questions. Taylor and Hall for instance argue that organisational change comes about when it “enhances the social legitimacy of the organization or its participants” (Hall and Taylor 1996 p. 949). In this way organisations are deeply embedded in their social context. The way for us to explain policy outcomes is therefore contingent on the informal rules and norms that shape the interests of actors involved. A central piece of the puzzle, then, is the socialisation of EU policy; how the local actors internalise the EU rules and norms, and how the outcomes of this process in turn influence actors’ self-perceptions and interests (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006 p. 395). The lens of sociological institutionalism therefore opens the window for an analysis of EU policy that is more sensitive of the local context. This makes it a useful conceptual tool for understanding the interaction between donor policy and NGOs.

Sociological institutionalism has received some pertinent criticism from the more sociologically attuned observers. In EU studies, rational choice theories and

sociological theories of institutionalism have been artificially kept apart by attaching strategic interests to the former and normative behaviour to the latter (Jenson and Merand 2010 pp. 83-84). Insistence on this distinction is less likely to correspond with reality, for “rational and normative behaviour are two sides of the same coin: rationality is socially constructed in the same way that norms have to be strategically deployed” (Jenson and Merand 2010 p. 84).

In order to address the interaction between norms and strategies, the thesis draws on actor-oriented perspectives by way of emphasising the scope for strategic action by local actors. The actor-oriented approach takes diversity and heterogeneity of possible actions as its starting point. It takes particular interest in situations where there exist “discrepancies of social interest [and] cultural interpretation” and is concerned with how these differences are mediated or transformed (Long 2001 p. 49). This is a useful consideration in the context of Turkey’s Europeanisation processes, as it offers insights to how such process may be negotiated by local actors. As such, actor-oriented methods form an approach that highlights the relevance of local cultural norms, together with an appreciation of the ability of local actors to make strategic decisions. It offers an insight to the messy and uncontrollable processes of socialisation that take place among Turkish NGOs in terms of internalising the rules and norms introduced by EU civil society policy.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The debate over whether civil society can exist in a Muslim context illustrates the multidimensionality behind the concept. Thus, any application of civil society theory that pushes beyond the geographical boundaries of the West should remain sensitive to the diversity of ways in which civil society action may manifest itself. The chapter highlights the importance of moving beyond the categories of civil society action that are drawn from the Western/European experience.

This chapter has anchored the discussion of civil society to the ideas that emerged during the social transformations of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and to the centrality of a particular Western experience of industrialisation and modernisation to the development of theories about civil society. Ferguson, Hegel and de Tocqueville are all examples of theorists whose work addressed the social changes that were brought about by rapid economic development. Their work highlighted the impact of the market and division of labour on the emergence of civil society, and it also showed

civil society as something which could ameliorate the negative side effects of economic development. De Tocqueville also argued that in the United States the impact of civil society reached beyond the social order and to the realm of political order by helping to hold the state accountable to its citizens. These thoughts continue to shine through the European and donor understandings of what is meant by civil society.

It is the apparent efficacy of civil society in bringing about economic and democratic development that makes policies aimed at advancement of civil society so attractive for policymakers. Thus, at least in terms of policy rhetoric, the contribution of civil society is viewed in wholly positive terms – the participation of civil society actors adds something positive to the existing policies and improves them. Such assumptions should be further problematised.

The latter part of the chapter focused on a more contextually sensitive treatment of civil society that has drawn out salient aspects of Muslim societies and of Turkish society. These kinds of observations ought to inform how we view civil society in non-Western contexts. Furthermore, such treatment of the concept pays attention to the gap that exists between how donors understand civil society to manifest itself, and what actually happens in contexts that are detached from donor reality. By drawing on sociological institutionalism and actor-oriented perspectives, the argument here suggests that where such gaps exist between policy and reality, local actors are key to understanding how the various interests are negotiated. What such a viewpoint highlights in the case of Turkey's Europeanisation, is the potential gaps between the EU policy framework and reality on the ground, and how as a consequence of this, the values and norms introduced by the EU policy framework become internalised in a particular way at the local level. The Europeanisation process unfolds in an uncertain and unpredictable way.

It is with such thoughts in mind that Chapter Three begins to explore the content of EU civil society policy.

### 3 EU Policy, the Pre-accession Process and Civil Society

This chapter outlines and explains the rationale behind EU policy towards civil society in Turkey. Currently, this rationale is rooted in motives that see Europeanisation as a central process within Turkey's accession phase. The role given to civil society within the policy framework is dictated by these motives, leading to strategies that see civil society as a vehicle of Europeanisation. The chapter makes two observations about these policy motives. First, NGOs serve as an *instrument* to the overall cause. They help to fill the gap between an aspirational goal of Europeanisation and the current state of affairs. Second, the vision that the EU has of civil society is based on a *universal* idea of the concept. The notion of civil society, as understood in the European context, is assumed to be readily transferable to contexts that are culturally and historically different. To what extent, then, has EU civil society policy been tailored to fit the Turkish reality?

The first part of this chapter provides a framework for understanding the formulation of policy and highlights the significance of policy language. The second part offers an overview of the main contours of EU civil society policy, as it has developed within the EU. The third section traces the characteristics of EU Mediterranean policy, and compares the EU approach within and outside its borders. The final section looks at EU civil society policy in Turkey and draw conclusions about the nature of this policy. The assessment demonstrates the “universality of instrumentality” by showing how civil society, in different contexts, is seen to shape into a similar instrument of change and reform, and questions the appropriateness of this strategy given the reality of civil society activity in the Turkish context.

#### 3.1 Approaches to EU policy

Recent EU policy towards Turkey, as Chapter One pointed out, has been largely dictated by the requirements of the enlargement process. That is to say, EU-Turkey relations have been dominated by the unidirectional adaptation of EU policy in order for Turkey to comply with EU *acquis* (Diez et al. 2005). Although this is an inevitable part of the accession process, and the content of what Turkey has to adapt in terms of policy cannot be compromised, it remains important to inquire how this process

operates. The nature of the process affects how individuals view the prospect of accession and determines what kind of inter-subjective meaning gets attached to the idea of EU membership (Risse-Kappen 2001). In other words, what kind of “societal Europeanisation” takes place (Diez et al. 2005 pp. 5-6)? How are meanings of Europeanisation internalised and made meaningful to local actors?

The three forms of “New Institutionalism” offer a useful framework conceptualising the processes. Rational choice institutionalism supposes that actors’ behaviour is driven by a “strategic calculus” (Hall and Taylor 1996). With a focus on formal institutions and the actions of member states, this strand of thinking suggests that individual actors form their preferences through a rational calculation. Another angle examines agenda-setting power as a source of influence (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006 p. 195). For example, when investigating the effectiveness of EU conditionality, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier found that when comparing the effectiveness of the two types of conditionality applied by the EU, democratic conditionality and *acquis* conditionality, the latter was more effective in bringing about change (2008). The political costs of adopting democratic and human rights norms as a result of EU conditionality were too high for incumbent governments. Highly nationalistic governments in particular remained resistant to the EU efforts to initiate democratic reform. It was also of relevance that *acquis* conditionality enters on stage only once formal accession negotiations have begun. Thus, for Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier the key explanatory variables were the domestic costs for governments that came with adopting EU rules, and the credibility of the promises of eventual EU accession that surround the conditionalities (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2008; cf. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004; cf. Schimmelfennig 2008).

Historical institutionalism, on the other hand, can be seen to build on the rational choice approach by adding a temporal dimension to the analysis. Therefore, how actors behave is determined partly by the rational choices they make, yet these are conditioned by past decisions (Hall and Taylor 1996 pp. 8-9; Kazamias and Featherstone 2001). The historical context creates certain path dependencies that make certain actions more likely in one country, and less likely in another. In this sense, the various policy documents reviewed in this chapter are dependent on the existing policy documents, forming a chain of decisions each influencing the range of possible actions available to the EU going forward. The assumptions that inform EU policy resonate with rational institutional approaches, and historical institutionalism can help explain

why certain policy trajectories have developed as policy builds on already existing policy. As such, these two conceptual lenses help explain how EU policy on civil society has come to take its current shape. It is against this backdrop that the role of local actors will be considered in detail in the chapters that follow.

When we discuss Europeanisation in the Turkish context, the following conceptual map of the different meanings attached to the concept is useful. Diez, Agnantopoulos and Kaliber break Europeanisation down to its policy, political, societal and discursive elements (2005). Policy Europeanisation refers to the impact of European integration on policymaking, focusing primarily on the “goodness of fit” between what is required by the next step of integration and what already exists within the country in question, followed by domestic adjustments where appropriate (Risse et al. 2001). Political Europeanisation focuses on the impact of European integration on political institutions and on their ability to deliver the reforms requested. In addition, this field of study concerns itself with the impact of European integration on a variety of political actors, such as political parties and interest groups. Different political agents are affected in different ways, as each agent may be hindered or empowered by certain consequences of the integration process. Societal Europeanisation, on the other hand focuses on questions of how social norms and identity formation may be pegged onto perceptions of European integration. Finally, discursive Europeanisation pertains to the study of how public discourses reference the EU – whether, and to what extent the language of “Europe” enters the domestic public discourse.

The policy process can be approached as rational and objective process. In such a case, policy is regarded as an instrument to be employed to pursue a predefined end result. Such policy is generally paired with an assumption that it is based on an objective criteria that applies equally; it has an air of universality (Dryzek 1990). Policy is seen as a technical, controlled exercise. On the other hand, it is possible to see policy as an inherently political activity, where various interests are constantly entering the process and policy is the outcome of a constantly evolving bargaining process (Gordon et al. 1977). Although policy as a rational, technical process has been widely critiqued for depoliticising a naturally political process (Ferguson 1990) and for placing emphasis on the institutions instead of the individual actors involved (Long 2001), such approaches remain largely favoured among policymakers.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Chapter Seven considers the critique offered by Ferguson, Long and others in detail.

Even where policymakers recognise the shortcomings of a rational approach, it is not easy to depart from it. Many would agree with Herbert Simon's seminal recommendation that the formulation of policy should follow a rational logic and attempt to consider political realities whilst satisficing (satisfying the minimum requirements for achieving a goal) in terms of the goals it aims for (Simon 1947 p. 159; Hill 1997). Bringing politics into policy, or designing policy from the point of view of individual actors on the ground may be the ideal approach, but may not seem like a realistic possibility.

In the 1980s the tendency to gravitate towards the rational approach to policymaking was reinforced by the increasing prevalence of "New Public Management" (NPM) as the dominant mode of policymaking (Hood 1995). The term encapsulates a shift in how Western societies perceived of the welfare state. The state and the public sector lacked the efficiency that was required in the post-industrial era. The diversification of economic production in the face of reduced industrial output meant that a one-size-fits-all welfare state was no longer adequate. Among the changes brought about by the NPM approach were: a reduced public sector role in delivering public services; competitive contracting out of public services to civil society and private sector; and an emphasis on measurable outcomes that can be used to assess performance (Hood 1991, 1995; Ferlie et al. 2001). The introduction of a certain private sector logic to public sector affairs thus aided the popularity of rational approaches to policymaking.

Civil society was incorporated in the broader strategies for policymaking and policy implementation that stemmed from NPM. The idea of civil society as third sector, as an alternative provider of public services, had already begun to take shape in the 1970s (Etzioni 1973). This sectoral conceptualisation divides society into the sectors of state, market and the charitable sector. In this logic, the meaning of civil society is understood through the categories of state and market. The third sector, therefore, is taken to refer to the realm of professional non-profit organisations that are able to interact both with state and market actors (Richter 2002). These are highly developed organisations that are able to provide quality services consistently and efficiently, to eloquently articulate their demands to government and to hold government accountable. Both the American and the European understanding of the meaning of third sector organisations includes a variety of service providers, such as private schools and hospitals, and therefore extends beyond the realm of NGOs

(Salamon and Anheier 1997). Their role at the higher echelons of the state makes third sector organisations an invaluable resource for governmental decision-making and service delivery. However, given the emphasis on the formal structures that are found within civil society at the expense of the more informal, third sector organisations are less likely than grassroots organisations to reach individual citizens and enable them to exercise their democratic voice.

Despite the similarities between the American and European usage of the concept of the third sector, it is important to point to the nuanced differences between them, particularly as these differences play an important part in clarifying the EU approach to engaging civil society within its policy processes. The European understanding has increasingly relied on the third way approach, where the aims that underlie the engagement of civil society reveal an intention to build a democratic community as well as to utilise civil society in a more technical service delivery function. As section 3.2 will illustrate in detail, there has been a gradual shift in EU policy language, from “interest groups” in 1992 to “voluntary organisations” in 1997, and finally to “NGOs” in 2000. While EU civil society policy has become more defined and thoughtful, it has also become more purposeful in marrying together the aims of democratisation and service delivery. Contrastingly in the US, the term third sector refers in a more apolitical way to the technical service delivery role that has been placed on professional organisations, be they NGOs, hospitals, clinics or schools.

These are the key points regarding the nature of policy formulation that feed into the discussion on EU civil society policy later in this chapter. The approach originates in NPM-styled ideas, where the role of CSOs is perceived as partners in delivering services, and the conceptualisation of policy expresses a preference towards a rational, technical process that offers an objective standard platform for policymaking in various contexts.

### *The role of policy language*

As the sections that follow are focused on the content of policy, it is important to highlight the language of civil society as it manifests itself in the EU policy documents. These documents provide the starting point for a process, which shapes the way in which local actors conceive of civil society and the way EU bureaucrats on the ground approach local civil societies. This transformative process is possible due to the power relationship between the EU as a donor and the NGO as a recipient of donor



funds. Civil society-related projects may shape what local civil society actors perceive as being appropriate behaviour.

The language of civil society has been described as a proxy for a particular understanding of western political values (Seckinelgin 2002). Seckinelgin argues that the language of civil society found in policy documents acts as a “metaphor for western liberalism”. This metaphor is a tool that “maps an experience from a source domain to some target domain” (e.g. from Western domain to a non-Western domain). A speaker selects a metaphor because it satisfactorily maps the experience of a new culture onto an already existing cultural understanding. Metaphor, therefore, is an “intuition” that enables the combination of two dissimilar experiences together (Seckinelgin 2002 pp. 357-360). These thoughts iterate observations made by Edward Said in his work on Orientalism. For Said, the language of the Orient that is utilised by any writer on the subject is based on a precedent of what the Orient means. The writer then uses this as a heuristic device to make sense of how the Orient ought to be understood (Said 1995). Thus, the metaphor – or a proxy – does not make the assumptions (the source domain) on which it is based, explicit. A particular understanding of civil society takes on the cloak of universality, justifies its use, and protects it from further questions regarding its applicability. Understanding the approaches of international donor agencies in terms of a metaphor therefore allows us to problematise the universal usage of the civil society rhetoric (Seckinelgin 2002 p. 361).

Policy language is deemed transformative, for it imports a set of external rules that shape people’s understanding of the role they are to play. Policy language is able to differentiate people into groups of deserving and undeserving, and it is the deserving that are much more likely to engage in the desired behaviour (Crowley et al. 2008). The benefits of such engagement – largely financial in the case of EU project funding in Turkey – are likely to strengthen the role of such behaviour in the local context, making it an increasingly hegemonic practice. Ultimately it is the unequal power relation between the policymakers and the policy recipients that gives policy language a potentially transformative effect. For example, by providing a particular content to civil society, the policy language is likely to block out that which does not fit, even where the discarded may be a part of the local reality of civil society (Seckinelgin 2008). There are, however, limits to how far such a transformative effect is realised in practice. EU policy is unlikely to have such an effect beyond those NGOs that actively

engage with EU policy through funded projects. Furthermore, as Chapter Seven in particular illustrates, even those NGOs that do partake in EU projects demonstrate a variety of intentions that deviate from the EU's stated policy objectives.

The work on policy language is not the only area where such an asymmetrical relationship has been identified. David Mosse, for example, argues in a similar fashion to the above that donor practice has been internationalised, referring to the tendency of donors to emphasise the universal over the contextual. Policy is based on universal principles, such as agreed international standards and financial guidelines. Such practices lead to the selection of a particular group of local partners that are able to meet donor expectations. It is this "hegemony of style" that allows donors to marginalise certain local actors and to secure local compliance with the international policy objectives (Lewis and Mosse 2005; Howell and Pearce 2001b).

When we conceive of donor assistance for civil society not merely as a technical process of delivering aid, but also as a way of exporting a set of socio-political processes and structures from the Western to the non-Western contexts, the implications of such policy become much more far-reaching. Donors, such as the EU, are much more likely to work with organisations that understand the metaphor – professional advocacy groups staffed with foreign educated employees, based in the capital city (Maina 1998). This exploration of how policy language has the potential to play out serves as an avenue to understanding the kinds of pitfalls a bureaucratic and technical approach to policy can have. This is particularly relevant in cases where policy frameworks cross cultural contexts. Ironically this is also the time when policy blueprints are often utilised. The above section has provided a background to the origin and nature of these blueprints, as well as clarified the role policy language plays. The remainder of this chapter unravels the language of the blueprints that are utilised in EU policy formulation.

### **3.2 Chronology of EU policy towards civil society**

This section focuses on how EU policy documents reflect on civil society, and aims to describe the nature of, and justifications for engaging with civil society at the European level. I review four documents in chronological order from 1992 to 2003. These dates are not arbitrary. The year 1992 marked the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, which led to an increasingly critical debate on the democratic deficit that existed within the EU and the potential role of civil society in remedying this

deficiency. By 2003 the policy discussions on the role of civil society had shifted away from a domestic debate to the realm of enlargement, and the document trace is picked up from here in the following sections.

The analysis of this chapter is based largely on the content of policy documents, which are the outcome of a process where the diversity of views that exist within the EU on the issue of civil society have already been reconciled. In this sense what is presented may gloss over a diversity of views that exist at the national level. For example, in communist Poland before 1989, the Catholic church was the only institution that remained independent from the organs of the state, making the 14,000 churches a crucial hub of civil societal activity. This legacy continues to inform Polish views of what is meant by civil society and how it is to be fostered through policy interventions (Buchowski 1996). In Sweden, even in the pre-democratic Sweden of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the state was never particularly hostile to the demands made by civil society and the early labour movement. The Swedish state is at the same time central and open, bureaucratised but not authoritarian that enables a series of trustful and close collaboration to take place between the state and CSOs (Trägårdh 2007). It can therefore be expected that Swedish and Polish views on what the role of civil society ought to be may differ from other countries, given the particular circumstances in which civil society has evolved. The different histories that accompany each European nation in terms of the development of civil society and its relationship with the state suggest that there exist a variety of meanings for civil society that may get overlooked when the analysis focuses on policy documents. Thus, the apparent consensus presented by the following policy documents in terms of what is meant by civil society and how it is expected to operate, is likely to paper over these differences and give a somewhat false impression of a unitary vision of civil society in Europe.

The documents reviewed in this chapter have been selected to illustrate the gradual evolution of EU policy on civil society since 1992. The discussion therefore focuses on a particular set of documents that help to illustrate the developing complexity of EU policy on civil society, with later sections focusing in on the cases of the Mediterranean and Turkey. The documents are not therefore representative of the total range available, but rather serve as an illustration of the nature of the approach the EU opted for within each evolutionary phase. The story told by these documents not only clarifies the origins of EU civil society policy, but also explains how certain themes have become prevalent within the EU civil society discourse. The policy

documents push forward two distinct roles for civil society. CSOs make a contribution to government policy either by delivering services that governments would provide otherwise, or by contributing to the decision-making process as policy is being devised. The state-civil society partnership is thus reinforcing a particular vision of state-civil society relations.

In a 1992 document, *An open and structured dialogue between the Commission and special interest groups* the European Commission began to explore its relationship with interest groups, both nonprofit and profit making organisations. The document followed on from the Galle Report which had raised concerns that the democratic process was being hijacked by the “obtrusive” behaviour of some lobbyists within the EU institutions (McLaughlin and Greenwood 1995). The Galle Report called for better regulation of interest representation in order to prevent abuses, greater transparency and improved access for nonprofit groups to the EU policymaking process. This report, as well as the policy document by the Commission that followed, were written at the same time as the negotiations for the Treaty of the European Union (Maastricht Treaty) were taking place in 1991-2. An underlining goal of the Treaty of EU was to develop a more open community that would benefit from a more informed public debate, and this document reflects the thought processes that tried to operationalise this aim.

The purpose of the 1992 communication from the Commission was therefore to spark a long-term discussion on the role of civil society actors in the workings of the EU, soliciting input from academics and professionals familiar with these issues. It recognised the value of special interest groups as a “channel to provide specific technical expertise” (European Commission 1992 p. 1). Describing the dialogue with these groups as “valuable”, the communication set out to further formalise the relationship and in so doing make the engagement process more transparent. Increased transparency in EU operations, the document argued, would ensure a more informed public debate on its activities. It recalls the Treaty of the European Union (Maastricht Treaty) that had been recently signed, and which states that “transparency of the decision-making process strengthens the democratic nature of the institutions and the public’s confidence in the administration” (European Commission 1992). Even at this early stage the value of civil society engagement is articulated in terms of contributions made to policy effectiveness and democratisation.

The second document, entitled *Communication from the Commission on promoting the role of voluntary organisations and foundations in Europe*, and published in 1997, develops the argumentation further and pursues the idea of civil dialogue as a means to achieve greater social solidarity and citizenship (European Commission 1997; Smismans 2003; Finke 2007). This communication is similar to the one discussed above in that its publication coincided with the ratification of the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997, which set out the principles of liberal democracy that the EU would adhere to: respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law and liberty (Greenwood 2007). The document therefore offers a strong indication of how this broad debate on democratic principles was to be interpreted as far as policy towards civil society was concerned.

Here civil society is for the first time considered separately from profit-making organisations that have a similar relationship with EU institutions. The document also recognises the role of civil society in creating jobs, demonstrating active citizenship and exercising democracy. These actions make a contribution to European integration, as the communication argues:

[CSOs are] engaged in the training and retraining of the unemployed, as well as providing services for less favoured people [...] For many people, membership of, or volunteering for, voluntary organisations and foundations, provides a vital means through which they can express their sense of citizenship, and demonstrate an active concern for their fellows and for society at large [...] foster a sense of solidarity and of citizenship, and provide the essential underpinnings of our democracy [...] providing citizens with the means with which they may critically examine government actions or proposals (European Commission 1997 pp. 4-7).

The document suggests that there are linkages between certain civil societal activities and the development of social solidarity, citizenship and democracy. By providing adequate means for civil society to participate in governmental decision-making processes, it is possible to foster such behaviour, the document contends, and in so doing enhance the democratic character of European society.

The democratic value of civil society is therefore linked to certain behaviour by civil society. In these policy documents, the idea of civil society becomes subsumed under a category of particular activities and outcomes. The activities related to consultation are linked with certain outcomes such as a better sense of solidarity, increased participation in democratic processes and improved policy effectiveness.

Citizen participation in shaping government policy is seen as a way of expressing a democratic voice. The motivations to pursue a greater relationship with civil society are based on improved policy efficacy and enhanced democratic processes.

In 1998, the EU began to prepare for the eventual enlargement to Eastern European countries, by gradually opening the accession negotiations with the 10 new member states who would join in May 2004. As the following two documents point out, the impending enlargement generates an additional focus for EU's civil society policy. The first document, from the year 2000, illustrates a new, more carefully thought out list of activities for cooperating with NGOs, which reflect the new-found challenges of enlargement and integration. The second document, a white paper from 2001, demonstrates how the development of civil society is deemed an integral part of the accession process for the Eastern European candidate countries.

A methodical and detailed consideration of the EU-civil society relationship appeared in the year 2000, in the form of a Commission discussion paper *The Commission and non-governmental organisations: Building a stronger partnership* (European Commission 2000). The document recognises the ever-increasing number of NGOs operating within and outside of Europe and acknowledges the need to develop a more structured framework for managing the relationships between NGOs and EU institutions. It offers a five-point rationale for cooperating with NGOs, which includes “fostering participatory democracy”, “contributing to policymaking” and “contributing to European integration” (European Commission 2000 pp. 3-4). Although much of the document is dedicated to technical, managerial and budgetary details of how EU grants to NGOs should operate, one section, entitled “Dialogue and Consultation” discusses how the broader strategy that the Commission envisions will be taken forward:

Dialogue and consultation between NGOs and the Commission have to be seen in the framework of the democratic decision-making process of the European institutions [...] dialogue between the European Commission and NGOs is an important complement to the institutional process of policy-shaping (European Commission 2000 p. 7).

These comments reiterate the policy logic outlined earlier, and the backbone of the EU logic to civil society engagement is beginning to crystallise. It is based on policy effectiveness and the democracy-enhancing characteristics of NGOs. Greenwood

describes these two sides of the policy coin as “input and output legitimacy” (Greenwood 2007; cf. Scharpf 1999). Input legitimacy draws on the genuine preferences of citizens, whilst output legitimacy is based on results and policy outcomes. The central point is that part of the rationale for the EU’s engagement with civil society views NGOs as a useful vehicle in generating input and output legitimacy. NGOs are thus a useful instrument that will help with broader dilemmas of governance that the EU faces.

In 2001, the *White Paper on European Governance* is published, a milestone document as far as relations with civil society are concerned (Greenwood 2007; Finke 2007). This document is concerned with the lack of public confidence in the European institutions – such as the EU parliament, the EU commission, and Council of Ministers – because they are complex and poorly understood. To tackle this concern, the paper posits the idea of “good governance” consisting of openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence (European Commission 2001). By opening up the policymaking process, the document argues, the European institutions can regain the confidence of the public. Civil society plays a central role in this:

Civil society plays an important role in giving voice to the concerns of citizens and delivering services that meet people’s needs [...] The organisations which make up civil society mobilise people and support, for instance, those suffering from exclusion or discrimination. The Union has encouraged the development of civil society in the applicant countries, as part of their preparation for membership (European Commission 2001).

The document presents two reasons to engage with civil society actors. First, civil society makes a real contribution to the delivery of social services. This is seen to be a good thing and one that should be supported. Second, they can amplify the democratic noise at the EU level, by mobilising citizens, and by giving a voice to people who would otherwise be unable to make their opinions heard. By listening to civil society, it may be possible to alleviate some of the concerns people have about a democratic deficit at the level of EU governance. Hence more civil society means both better services and better democracy. The document reflects a genuine interest in the potential contribution civil society can make to improved governance. Bottom up involvement and consulting civil society were also the two areas that drew most positive interests from the public, according to a follow-up report commissioned on

European governance (European Commission 2003a p. 8). The above quotation is also interesting for the reference it makes to EU candidate countries. There is an effortless shift from the internal EU context to issues that exist outside of these borders. In other words, there is an expectation that civil society in a candidate country operates – or ought to operate – in a similar fashion to how it does within the EU. This prescribes a particular type as the correct form of civil society, and this is what should be aspired to in applicant countries. It paves the way for Europeanisation processes to unfold in ways congruent with this view of what civil society means.

The four documents selected for this section reflect the different points in the gradual evolution of EU policy, and illustrate the evolving complexity of EU civil society policy. The policy documents demonstrate how civil society is seen to attend to a variety of issues, such as transparency, democratisation and further EU integration, for example. An interesting detail revealed by the documents relates to the gradual shift in the language used to describe policy towards civil society. In 1992 the focus was on interests groups, and the document published in 1997 refers to voluntary organisations. By 2000 the terminology has again shifted, now citing NGOs as the focus of EU policy within civil society. It would seem that through this shift in language, from interest groups to NGOs, EU policy is aligning itself with the kinds of approaches to civil society development that have already been adopted among the donor circles of international development. Moreover, an approach focusing on NGOs could also be seen as more suited to the needs of the EU enlargement process, as the accession negotiations with the Eastern European candidate countries were well under way by the year 2000.

### *Policy characteristics*

Moving now on from looking at reasons for civil society engagement to investigating how it is engaged. What kind of policies emerge from the above rationale? At the EU level, the motivation for involving CSOs originates largely from a desire to improve its own decision-making and policymaking capacities. The policy measures circulate around two keywords: consultation and dialogue. Already in 1997, the communication on *Voluntary Organisations and Foundations* suggested that “strong civil dialogue” should be the “future policy objective” for dealing with civil society (European Commission 1997 p. 7). The *White Paper on European Governance* pushes forward these ideas and calls for a “reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue” in future



EU engagements with civil society (European Commission 2001 p. 16). The benefits of increased consultation are argued in terms of the improvements this would bring to policy design and in terms of the enhanced efficiencies that would result from this. Dialogue, on the other hand, is perceived primarily to facilitate a two-way dissemination of information. Through this dialogue information travels both downstream, through CSOs to European citizens, as well as upstream, ensuring that grassroots experiences are taken into account. It reflects concern for both input and output legitimacy.

These roles resonate with the concept of the third sector. As was discussed in Chapter Two, the thinking behind third sector aims to combine the best of two worlds – the efficiency of the private sector and the accountability of government (Etzioni 1973; Salamon 1981, 1987). Third sector logic stems also from ideas behind New Public Management that concern the diversity of service delivery. Bringing CSOs into the mix offers a more diverse set of service providers as well as new points of view at the policy table. The concepts of consultation and dialogue, as these have been framed in the policy documents discussed here, are products of a third way logic. The language of consultation expects CSOs to meet on a level playing field either at national or European level, and to have the capacity to communicate their ideas effectively at this level. It is only a large professional organisation that is able to undertake such a role. In addition, the language of dialogue suggests a close bond, even like-mindedness, between those that are working together. The notion of dialogue assumes that the parties in dialogue are not in total disagreement, as it is the resolution of differences that is the expected end result of a dialogue. All in all, the policy characteristics offer opportunities to a narrow field of actors who are already operating near the firmament of civil society.

### *Sub-conclusion*

Within its own borders, the EU has two main objectives behind its motivation to engage with civil society. These are first, to improve its own policy efficacy – either by enjoying the support of civil society in delivering services outlined by policy, or by consulting civil society to improve the content of policy; and second, to improve the EU's democratic credentials by utilising CSOs as channels for citizens to make their concerns heard at the European level. These motivations have crystallised in two broad policy developments. One is to increase consultation with CSOs when developing new

policies; the other is to improve the dialogue between EU institutions and CSOs. Both of these objectives suggest a particular understanding of what is understood by the term CSO. This understanding resonates strongly with the logic of the third sector, and with identifying a close relationship between the state, the market and civil society. CSOs play a complementary role to the state and the market. This logic, when looking for partners in civil society either to consult on policy reform or to deliver services, emphasises the role of the large, professional CSOs that already have capacity, connections and the know-how of working at the European level. The subsequent sections consider the parallels between the experiences of engaging civil society actors within the EU, and outside its borders.

### 3.3 EU civil society policy in the Mediterranean context

In the last two decades the Mediterranean region has become an increasingly important partner in the EU's external policy (Crawford 1998). Figures summarising aid flows confer this: between 1984 and 2004 aid to Middle East and North Africa (regions covered by EU's Mediterranean policy) increased from 7.3 per cent to 18.5 per cent. During the same time period aid to Sub-Saharan Africa decreased from 65.5 per cent to 43.4 per cent. In 1997, the Treaty of Amsterdam was ratified, making democracy and human rights a central objective of EU external policy and contributing to this shift in the direction of funding (Brandtner and Rosas 1998). This is also the context in which EU policy has employed the idea of civil society in external context. The current section will address this question from the point of view of wider EU policy towards civil society in the Mediterranean region. In the years preceding Turkey's accession negotiations, EU civil society development projects in Turkey were operated from within the MEDA<sup>20</sup> programme, which was designed to help the Mediterranean non-member countries to reform their economic and social structures.

Democratic reform is at the heart of EU's more recent policy towards the Mediterranean region<sup>21</sup>, although the suitability of this approach has come under questioning. In a recent assessment, for example, Roderick Pace has argued that there are benefits to reforms that set up free market economies as they create irresistible

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<sup>20</sup> MEDA stands for *mesure d'ajustement* and is the "legal framework for the bulk of EU aid to Mediterranean Partner Countries across a wide range of sectors" (Stetter 2003)

<sup>21</sup> The countries considered under EU's Mediterranean policy are: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey (on certain occasions, unless a country specific policy exists as part of the pre-accession process)

pressures to establish democratic political institutions. However, most countries in the region accept the reforms advocating economic liberalism, but resist democratic reforms. This resistance is a pragmatic response by a political elite clinging to power, not evidence of a fundamental clash between different cultural principles (Islamic) and liberal democracy. Pace does not suggest, therefore, that EU policy is doomed to fail regardless of the form its policies take, but rather, that in its current form the policy misunderstands the regional context by assuming a causal relationship between liberal economic policies and democratisation. This is not a universally applicable formula. The growth of civil society in this context, Pace argues, should be seen merely as a function of an autocratic rulers' strategy of controlled liberalisation (Pace 2007). In an assessment of EU aid policy in the context of Morocco, Patrick Holden has argued that EU policy, together with accompanying economic reforms are likely to fall short of developing democracy. Instead the more likely end result is hybridisation, where an authoritarian state adopts certain liberal modes of governance. Holden further argues that realistically, hybridisation should be viewed as the strategic end goal for EU aid policy (Holden 2005). Both pieces of research raise question about the efficacy of inducing democratic reform in the Mediterranean region by external means.

Nor has EU policy been particularly consistent. In comparing the application of the democracy rhetoric between EU efforts to promote civil society in Africa and the Middle East, Gordon Crawford has noted significant differences in its application. The EU has been much more forgiving with Middle Eastern countries' resistance to democratic reform. This, he argues, has to do with the instrumental (as opposed to normative) approach to democracy that is pursued by EU policy. Political stability is regarded as more important than full-fledged democratisation (Crawford 2007 p. 183). The pragmatic aim of EU policy is, he argues, to create a slimmer bureaucracy, leaving the authoritarian political elite in its place.

Others, however, argue that it is necessary to move beyond considerations of how external actors can influence democratisation processes, and to focus on the possible contributions of domestic actors (Pace et al. 2009). Capturing the debates about EU policy and the particular visions of democracy embedded within it are important, but are only able to offer a limited explanation of how these policies are captured and implemented by local actors. The relationships are not unidirectional and the EU is not necessarily the dominant partner ( pp. 7-8).

*The Barcelona Process*

EU policy towards the Mediterranean region has become crystallised in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, commonly known as the Barcelona Process. Established in the slipstream of the Barcelona Declaration in 1995, the Barcelona Process has focused on improving relations with the non-EU member states of the Mediterranean (European Commission 2008b). The documents detailing this process also outline the key contours of EU policy. One of the stated key goals relevant here is “the creation of an area of peace and stability based on fundamental principles, including respect for human rights and democracy” (European Commission 2008b p. 2). The ability to act freely within civil society is a fundamental part of this goal and something that is reinforced on several occasions in the document. The Barcelona Process is conceptualised under three pillars: “Political and Security Dialogue”, “Economic and Financial Partnership”, and “Social, Cultural and Human partnership”. The role of civil society is considered under this last pillar, which focuses on:

[...] facilitating a dialogue between cultures [working with] people on the ground [...] in order to build their capacity and promote principles such as modernization, participation, equality, human rights, democracy and good governance (European Commission 2007a p. 58).

More recently, the democracy and human rights aspect of the partnership has augmented in importance, at the same time making civil society more central to the process. In 2003 the European Commission issued a Communication entitled *Reinvigorating EU Actions on Human Rights and Democratisation with Mediterranean Partners – Strategic Guidelines* (European Commission 2003b). As the title suggests, the document identifies a need to find ways to breathe new life into EU’s democracy-building efforts in the region. It calls for democratisation and human rights promotion to be prioritised within EU external policy and for a proactive approach to be adopted (European Commission 2003b). Furthermore, according to the document, democracy and human rights should constitute the core objectives of EU’s external policy – after all, these are the same principles upon which the EU itself has been founded. Hence, the experience of democracy from within the EU is informing the expectations of how its external policy of democracy promotion should shape out:

The traditional EU approach of constructive advocacy and supporting civil society activists has not always been supported by local governments [in the Mediterranean region]. More must be done to promote respect for universal human rights (European Commission 2003b p. 4).

The role of civil society has become increasingly central to the implementation and monitoring of EU human rights and democratisation policies in the region. The value of NGOs is in their “effectiveness in identifying problems and lobbying for improvements” (p. 13). The problems in the Mediterranean region are particularly acute for NGOs that practice advocacy or work in the field of human rights as they “face legal and administrative constraints, are frequently marginalised and sometimes repressed” (p. 4). Furthermore, other NGOs working more broadly in the civil and political spheres are also identified as restricted in what they are allowed to do and refrained from networking internationally. In an answer to these issues, the Communication proposes that future National Action Plans consider the following actions in support of NGOs: to identify modifications to the legal or administrative frameworks; strengthen NGO capacity through training; and promote networking between local NGOs, European NGOs and international networks (p. 15). Regular contact between Commission Delegations and civil society are also recommended (p. 19).

### *Three programmes that engage civil society*

The Barcelona process has initiated three programmes that aim directly towards civil societal development, each of which funds several projects.<sup>22</sup> The first of these programmes to be discussed, “TRESMED – Civil Society Dialogue” is a project that aims to provide a framework for dialogue in an effort to support civil society, good governance and democratisation. In particular the project aims to strengthen the consultative role of civil society, encouraging participation in political decision-making processes (European Commission 2007a p. 72). The programme activities consist of NGO training, study visits, seminars and networking. By giving social and economic actors a voice, the objective of the programme is to support civil society, good governance and democratisation. Interestingly, Turkey does not participate in this

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<sup>22</sup> See “Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, Regional Co-operation – An overview of programmes and projects” (2007) for more detail

programme, despite its inclusion in most other activities. It is likely that Turkey's own Civil Society Dialogue programme was too similar to justify inclusion in the Mediterranean project as well (a discussion of this will follow in the next section).

The second programme, entitled "Med-Pact – Local Authorities", aims to encourage dialogue and cooperation between cities and civil societies, and in so doing to push for a greater "cultural and social rapprochement between the EU and the Mediterranean partners". The programme looks to strengthen municipalities by enhancing their networks and thus their access to information on issues of urban development. The programme regards civil society as an important element of such networks, and the potential for NGOs to gain capacity from such partnerships is recognised as a possible positive outcome (Med-Pact 2009).

The third programme, the "EuroMed Civil Forum", aspires to create a platform through which to "strengthen the role of civil society organisations in the region" by being able to "network, discuss their role, and make recommendations to governments" (European Commission 2007a p. 70). The Forum has met annually at the same time as the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers. In 2003, in response to criticisms of the Forum's ineffectiveness, the Euro-Mediterranean Non-Governmental Platform was launched to reform the EuroMed Civil Forum. Unhappiness with the lack of political impact and failure to fulfil its role as a platform for policy recommendations was cited among the reasons for this change (The Non-Governmental Platform 2003). Strengthening the role of civil society in the region is thus linked with its ability to make policy recommendations or to have a political impact.

#### *Sub-conclusion*

In the context of the Barcelona Process, EU policy has embraced civil society. It has done so in pursuing improved standards of human rights and democracy, dialogue between societal actors as well as between cultures, and in building human capacity on the ground. Civil society-related projects have reflected these aims. The broader EU strategy for the Mediterranean has focused increasingly on prioritising human rights and democracy. This is a clear shift in emphasis from the way in which the EU engages civil society domestically, although the benefit of democratisation is raised in both contexts. The policy in the Mediterranean context is explicitly calling for improvements in the constraints that CSOs face on their activities. CSOs are valued for

their work in lobbying governments for improvements as well as for implementing and monitoring democratisation and human rights policies. The language explaining the policy shift describes it as a way to better align EU external policy with EU's internal values of democracy and human rights.

On the other hand, dialogue in particular has played a significant role in shaping the types of projects where civil society actors have been engaged in. Much emphasis was placed on communications and networking between CSOs in addition to training in skills required by a successful dialogue (e.g. Tresmed – civil society dialogue). Elsewhere, projects on relations between civil society and local authorities focused on increased access to information (e.g. Med-Pact – local Authorities). Consultation of civil society was an explicit aim of the EuroMed Civil Forum, to the extent that in 2003 a new platform was launched to remedy the shortcomings of the EuroMed Forum in order to enhance its consultative impact.

It is not surprising to see that civil society is expected to contribute to democratisation, improved standards of human rights and to increased social dialogue on the basis of the European playbook. As the previous section illustrated, within Europe the democratic value of civil society arises from its role in policy consultation with governments, and the projects in the Mediterranean region aspire to this also. However, there is an additional interest in the Mediterranean policy to deal explicitly with concerns over human rights, and to address limitations on the freedom of association. Within the EU civil society is seen as the hub for two-way dissemination of information between citizens and the government. A similar role emerges also from the policies directed at the Mediterranean.

Thus, across the two contexts there is considerable overlap between the underlying premise of what civil society is there to do. On the one hand greater civil society involvement can improve the efficacy of other EU policies in the region. On the other hand civil society can promote democracy by channelling the concerns of citizens to the higher echelons. Is the EU, therefore exporting a particular style of civil society activism that has more resonance with the European vision of civil society as third sector, where CSOs play the dual role of providing services and deepening democratic practices? What impact might this have on the success of the policy on the ground?

### 3.4 EU civil society policy in the Turkish context

This section looks more closely at the justifications given for EU involvement in civil society activity in Turkey. The documentation continues to iterate the democratising force of civil society, and advocates for policies that engage civil society in a dialogue. Two key streams for civil society funding emerge that are discussed here. One is the support for initiatives that aim to strengthen democracy in Turkey by funding CSOs. The second one is a package of initiatives delivered in support of a process entitled Civil Society Dialogue. There are many similarities between the policy language found in documents concerning policy towards civil society within the EU and those that describe the support for Turkish civil society. This is expected, given that the policy aims are closely related to the broader aim of Turkey's eventual EU accession. I pick up the document trail on internal policy from section 3.2, where documents published in 2001 and 2003 were beginning to pay increasing attention to issues relating to the EU accession countries. As the start of the accession negotiations in 2004 approached, policy towards Turkey gets reformulated to reflect the shift from an external partner to a candidate country and is therefore regarded as part of the internal policy framework. Although the chapter points to similarities in EU civil society policy in a variety of contexts, in the case of Turkey EU policy makes a conscious effort to address the state-centred nature of Turkish politics and policymaking (the related political characteristics of Turkey are discussed in detail in Chapter Four).

In October 2004, the European Commission published a document which contained the broad framework for Turkey's accession process. The document, entitled "Recommendation of the European Commission on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession", highlights two policy areas where civil society is given a prominent role. First, civil society has an important role in reinforcing and supporting the political reform process that is taking place in Turkey. Second, the document identified a need to strengthen the dialogue between Turkey and the EU on a number of issues, including the differences of cultures, religion, issues relating to migration, concerns on minority rights and terrorism. The document further opined that "civil society should play the most important role in this dialogue" (European Commission 2004 p. 8). This document laid the ground for the two-pronged approach to civil society engagement that the EU has adopted in conjunction with Turkey's accession process. The following two sections outline the contours of this binary approach



*Policy stream 1: Democracy*

The European Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law (European Union 1997).

To join the EU, a new Member State must [achieve] stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities (European Union 2009).

The democratic guidelines included in the accession criteria are possibly the most important theme for reform that the Turkish government is faced with, as far as EU membership is concerned. The centrality of democratic development to the EU accession process is laid out by the first of three pillars that together make up the Copenhagen Criteria: the conditions of entry for all candidate countries since 1999. This pillar outlines stable democratic institutions, rule of law, human rights and protection of minorities as prerequisites for accession. The second pillar expects Turkey to develop and maintain a functioning market economy with the capacity to cope with market forces within the EU. The third pillar requires Turkey to comply with *Community acquis* (the total body of EU law). Within this three-pronged approach, the role of civil society in the accession process is largely framed around the first pillar, around the issues of democracy and human rights. The EU regards civil society as a fundamental constituent of democracy. A look at the rationales that accompany EU projects shows how they are often justified on the bases of their contribution to democratisation. Three such project rationales will be analysed with the intention of explicating what the EU visualises the contribution of civil society to be.

The first example is from a project on “Improving co-operation between the NGOs and the public sector and strengthening the NGOs democratic participation level”. The dual objective set out by the project title fits neatly within the process of aligning Turkey’s domestic institutional framework with those of the EU. In order to achieve these aims, the project aims to create and implement an “action plan on the public sector – civil society cooperation”. The emphasis will be on achieving cooperation through a structured dialogue between NGOs and the public sector, as an improved relationship between the two is seen as a required outcome of the pre-

accession phase (European Commission 2003c pp. 1-2). Indeed, the project objectives are consciously and consistently aligned with the aims of the accession process:

A well-developed and functioning civil society is an essential element of a democratic system and efficient NGOs have a key role to play in expressing the demands of citizens by encouraging their active participation as well as raising their awareness. Furthermore, many elements of the *acquis communautaire* are based on the existence of operational NGOs operating within the related policy area (European Commission 2003c p. 2).

The two reasons that are given for why this project is necessary can be summarised as “it is good for democracy” and “it is required by the accession process”. Structured dialogue between NGOs and the public sector is desirable because it increases the democratic participation levels of NGOs and because this dialogue improves ties between civil society and the public sector. Elements of the EU law (*acquis*) anticipate the existence of NGOs that act in a certain way, and contribute to the policy process in a certain way. If Turkey is to successfully comply with the accession criteria, it needs to have NGOs fulfilling these roles. The project documentation in fact admits that certain types of NGO relationships and activities are encouraged because this is the way in which things are done within in the EU.

The second example is a project entitled “Strengthening Freedom of Association for Further Development of Civil Society”. The overall objective is stated as “enhanced participatory democracy through strengthened NGOs”. This is to be achieved by increasing NGO capacity for “networking, voluntary work, national and international dialogue in Turkey” (European Commission 2004 p. 1). The justification for the project is based on the requirements of the first pillar of the Copenhagen Criteria. The document recognises that several steps have already been taken in order to carry out reforms that lead to the fulfilment of the said criteria, however:

Despite these reforms aiming at a more favourable environment for the operations of the NGOs, the participation level of the NGOs in all sectors of the democratic life has remained limited (European Commission 2004 p. 3)

The activities perceived by the project are broken down to three components. The first component includes capacity-building for NGOs through a “comprehensive training

[...] covering different aspects of organisations' management and the needs of the civil society sector". The second component is comprised of raising awareness of civil society among NGOs, media, public authorities and general public by establishing a communication centre and by promoting the NGO sector through seminars, conferences and publications. The third component offers micro-grants to NGOs in order to facilitate dialogue and communication with their counterparts in the EU (European Commission 2004 p. 5).

The third sample project is called "Strengthening civil society in the pre-accession process", which aims to "contribute to the consolidation and broadening of political reforms and EU alignment efforts through strengthening the civil society in Turkey in the pre-accession process" (European Commission 2005). The first component of the project offers grants to various rights-based pursuits in the areas of women's rights, disability rights, consumer rights, child rights and environmental activism. The second component provides funds to activities that consolidate human rights and democracy, combat violence against women or contribute to the engagement of the Turkish public in the accession process (European Commission 2005). In each of these areas the document goes on to provide further justification for civil society funding by outlining the current weaknesses in civil society activity in each area, and expressing a desire to develop this further. This is desirable because it helps to consolidate the ongoing reforms, and to consolidate the currently underdeveloped role of civil society in each of the aforementioned areas. Through these developments Turkey will move a step closer to EU membership, the document suggests (European Commission 2005 p. 28).

During the years leading up to the start of the accession process (2004), efforts at democratisation were at the heart of EU civil society building efforts in Turkey. Project funding supporting rights-based initiatives, encouraging networking between NGOs by way of strengthening their common voice, and improving relations between NGOs and the public sector were some of the areas where democratisation was being pursued by the above projects. From 2004 onwards, the attention of civil society policy has gradually moved in another direction.

*Policy stream 2: Dialogue*

Parallel to accession negotiations, the Union will engage with every candidate state in an intensive political and cultural dialogue. With the aim of enhancing mutual understanding by bringing people together, this inclusive dialogue also will involve civil society (European Commission 2009).

As the democracy building initiatives were being carried out through project funding, the next phase of the EU-civil society relationship was also being developed. This came in the form of a programme on civil society dialogue, which, in the context of the accession process has gradually taken over from democratisation as the central theme of civil society funding (although the two remain interlinked). Drawing on the rational choice framework, a new kind of rational calculus entered the EU-Turkey relationship with the advent of the membership negotiations. Funding for civil society shifted away from addressing Turkey's democratic and political shortcomings directly and focused primarily on facilitating the accession process.

The idea of civil society dialogue was first proposed in October 2004 by the European Commission and endorsed by the European Council in December 2004 (European Commission 2004a). Incidentally, parallel to this, on December 17<sup>th</sup> 2004 European Union agreed to initiate the accession negotiations with Turkey. Then in June 2005 – four months before the first six chapters of the *acquis* are opened for negotiations in October – a communication entitled *Civil Society Dialogue between the EU and Candidate Countries* was published by the European Commission that spells out the nature of the policy shift this innovation brings along with it. The document claims to draw on the lessons learnt from previous rounds of enlargement and, as the timeline suggests, was allegedly written with Turkey's accession negotiations specifically in mind.<sup>23</sup> The emergence of civil society dialogue represents an important policy shift that further centralises the role of civil society in the accession process. For example, the communication earmarks as much as eight to ten per cent of Turkey's total annual financial assistance to civil society related activities (European Union 2005 p. 14). The document states that:

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with a senior civil servant, EU delegation to Turkey, Ankara, 03 April 2008. [B5]

[...] any future enlargement of the EU needs to be supported by a strong, deep and sustained dialogue [...] this would help to bridge the information gap, achieve better mutual knowledge and bring citizens and different cultures, political and economic systems closer together, thus ensuring a stronger awareness of the opportunities as well as challenges of future accessions [...] *civil society should play the most important role in this dialogue* (European Union 2005 p. 2).

The aim of this dialogue is to make sure that both Turkish and EU citizens are sufficiently informed about the other prior to accession. The more efforts there are at exchanging ideas across the EU-Turkey borders, the more ideological cleavages can be bridged, and differences of opinion ironed out. NGOs are seen as key agents within this process of dialogue, asked to facilitate the accession process by way of establishing a channel of communication between the two sides in the negotiations. The document goes on to outline further aims as well. This dialogue, by way of increasing the participation of civil society in political, cultural and economic development, is seen to develop:

[...] a lively and vibrant civil society in candidate countries, which is key to the consolidation of human rights and democracy, in line with the political criteria for accession (European Union 2005 p. 4).

Although civil society dialogue digresses away from the democratisation rhetoric of earlier projects, this element has not been entirely lost in the new policy framework. By partaking in civil society dialogue, NGOs still contribute to the building of a more vibrant civil society, which in turn consolidates democracy (European Commission 2005 p. 3). This new policy therefore continues the effort by the EU to balance the strong state in Turkey with a more active society in Turkey.

A recent two-year long project involving Turkish and European trade unions illustrates how civil society dialogue has been operationalised in practice. Carried out between August 2007 and September 2009, a project entitled “Civil Society Dialogue – Bringing together workers from Turkey and European Union through a ‘shared culture of work’” aimed to “strengthen contacts and mutual exchange of experience between the trade unions of Turkey and trade unions of EU member states” (European Commission 2006c pp. 2-3). The activities were based on ideas such as awareness visits and communication networks. In

addition, the project set out to develop information brochures on various subjects the explored the different histories of trade union movements, social rights, and the role of civil society in each of the participating countries. A total of 300,000 copies of each brochure published in Turkey and 8,000 copies in each of the EU member states was planned to be published. The project was jointly managed by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and its four member confederations from Turkey).<sup>24</sup> This €3,5 million project offers some insight into the kinds of activities that the idea of civil society dialogue in Turkey refers to.

The most extensive and comprehensive commitment to increased civil society dialogue, however, has come in the form of a broad, new grant programme. “Promotion of the Civil Society Dialogue between Turkey and the European Union”, which ran from 2006 to December 2009 and committed to awarding grants amounting to €19,3 million in total. The grants divided across four separate schemes: Towns and Municipalities (€5million), Professional Organisations (€3 million), Universities (€9,3 million) and Youth Initiatives for Dialogue (€2 million). In total, 119 projects have been awarded grants, and in each case a Turkish organisation has partnered with an organisation from an EU member state or another candidate country (Civil Society Dialogue Project 2009).

The programme aims to strengthen contacts and the exchange of experiences between civil society in the EU and Turkey, and to ensure better understanding on both sides of the history, culture and values of the other (European Commission 2006b p. 1). The development of civil society dialogue with Turkey is underlined by an expectation that this will contribute to a better informed public opinion, encourage discussion on culture and values, and facilitate the sharing of experiences across the EU-Turkey border. These outcomes are expected to increase civil society participation in the political, cultural and economic development of Turkey, and to aid in the “development of a lively and vibrant civil society, which is key to the consolidation of democracy” (European Commission 2006b pp. 4-5). There seems to be an instrumental undertone to these projects, seeing NGOs as vehicles that aim to deliver rather specific outcomes.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.etuc.org/a/82> accessed 27 May 2010. The four Turkish unions that are members are: TÜRK-İŞ, HAK-İŞ, DİSK and KESK. The role of Turkish trade unions is covered in more detail in Chapter Four, section 4.1 and in Chapter Six.

The following section considers one of these four grant schemes in closer detail, namely the Youth Initiatives for Dialogue scheme. The objectives for this scheme follow the broader programme aims outlined above. The two central aims of the grant are the following:

- 1) to promote mutually beneficial and sustainable relationships between youth initiatives in Turkey and in EU Member States and candidate countries and promote dialogue between the Turkish and EU counterparts by addressing the opportunities and challenges of enlargement;
- 2) to encourage exchange of knowledge and best practices on planning and implementation of EU policies (EUSG 2009).

These objectives utilise civil society as an instrument in the accession process. The participating youth groups are expected, through their involvement in the project, to address issues concerning EU enlargement. There is an expectation that the funding will facilitate a learning process that directly helps the accession process. This, when compared with the earlier funding framework that concentrated on democratisation, represents a clear shift in EU civil society policy.

The funding is granted for projects that are between €30,000 and €100,000 in value, and this leads to further consequences for participating NGOs. At most, 90 per cent of the total costs of the project are covered by the grant. In other words, in order to qualify for a grant the recipient must have at least €3,000 in cash or to have secured funding from another non-EU source (EUSG 2009). Together, these requirements limit potential applicants. Given the relatively high value of the grants, it is likely that any successful applicant will have had previous experience of managing a funded project. The requirement for alternate sources of funding acts as a similar limitation; a successful candidate is required to have the additional capacity to look for two sources of funding at the same time. These requirements will channel the funding towards large, established entities that are able to manage the process successfully.

Finally, all projects are required to incorporate two kinds of compulsory activities. First, to organise information campaigns and events, such as seminars and conferences, and to engage wider community groups with these activities. Second, projects are required to include actions and events that promote the project and ensure the visibility of EU support and the concept of civil society dialogue (EUSG 2009). In effect, the participating NGOs are treated as an

extension of a marketing campaign for EU enlargement. Civil society is here seen as a partner that has been asked to deliver specific outcomes that suit EU needs in terms of Turkey's broader accession process.

Although one could argue that the requirements EU projects make are in fact reasonable, given that the funding comes from taxpayers who expect the money to be spent effectively, it is also important to consider the extent to which this style of funding complements the end goals of the funding, such as democratisation and dialogue between NGOs. As Chapter Six illustrates, this type of funding is contributing to the development of a two-tier civil society between those that are able to gain access to funding, and those that are not. Moreover, Chapter Seven highlights the issue of NGOs gaining access to EU funding with the help of consultancy firms that write the applications, whilst the NGOs may in fact lack the capacity to deliver the projects competently. It is therefore important to investigate the relationship between stated aims and actual outcomes of EU civil society policy.

#### *Sub-conclusion*

In light of the above, a third sector-based understanding of civil society remains relevant to an analysis of the way projects have taken shape under civil society dialogue. In other words, civil society is seen to contribute to the efficacy of EU policy and to offer a channel for two-way communication of messages between government and its citizens. As such, the role of NGOs is viewed in terms of delivering a service or in some other way aiding the government to achieve their aims. By imposing a set of compulsory activities on all projects supported by this facility, the EU has made a conscious effort to shape the contribution of NGOs. In particular, it is important to see how the EU envisions civil society to contribute to the accession process as a partner that can be relied on delivering certain outcomes. The large monetary size of the individual grants favour professional entities that are able to manage large projects. Their way of operating is likely to already resonate strongly with third sector logic. Thus the pledge made for civil society dialogue to contribute to democratisation is realised in the indirect manner that an understanding of civil society as a third sector provides: through the delivery of services and by participating in the delivery and development of policy. It remains to be seen whether Turkish civil society is likely to



operate in the manner outlined by these policies, and this is a question that is returned to later in the empirical chapters of the thesis.

Both of these policy streams challenge the tradition of a strong central state that isolates society from political decision making from society. Thus, EU civil society policy can be seen as an attempt to address such shortcomings by providing new avenues – in particular in the case of civil society dialogue – for NGOs and the public sector to work together and for NGOs to possess the wherewithal for making a constructive contribution to policy. It is hoped that this may lead to a more inclusive relationship between state and civil society.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In exploring the evolution of EU policies towards civil society in section 3.2 two broad conclusions were made. First, working with CSOs was justified because they were able to deliver important services to society and thus support governments in serving their citizens. Second, CSOs were deemed valuable because they were able to enhance the democratic qualities of a society by providing an avenue through which citizens could make their voices heard. Moreover, the very act of delivering services through CSOs was seen as democracy enhancing. This thinking crystallised around two policy objectives. The first objective was to consult CSOs during the policymaking process in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of policies. The second objective aimed to start a dialogue that leads to a two-way dissemination of information.

These policy aspirations have much in common with the theoretical premise introduced by Ferguson, Hegel and de Tocqueville in the previous chapter. Civil society is seen as a useful facilitator between the market economy and the state, whilst at the same time retaining independence from the two. Shadowing de Tocqueville's argument about the democratic value of civil society, the independence also makes civil society a useful ally in democratisation efforts, as it enables civil society actors to question the state and to ensure it remains accountable to its citizens. Such qualities make civil society a key component of a successful modern system of governance.

Policies aspiring to fulfil these objectives could be identified in each of the three contexts reviewed: domestic (within EU), Mediterranean and Turkish. Policies consistently linked the active presence of civil society to democratisation and greater policy effectiveness. Although EU democracy promotion policies in the Mediterranean and in Turkey have focused less on engaging CSOs in consultations on government

decision-making, it seems that by supporting groups (such as rights-based NGOs) who make their critique of government policy heard through more informal means, the EU has a similar end goal in mind. As has been outlined in the sections of this chapter, these policies are underlined by a desire to see democratic development in the recipient countries. The policy of civil society dialogue has been readily transferred to external contexts. The similarities in the policies, and in the language supporting these policies, indicate that the EU regards the application of the concept in universal fashion across different contexts as unproblematic. It is a neutral, technical policy exercise in how to engage civil society in a constructive manner. For the EU, civil society is an instrument that can aid in realising their policy goals as well as a structure that is believed to function in a sufficiently similar manner across various cultural contexts.

How useful is it to have this kind of uniformity in policymaking? Some would advocate that we should continue to see policy as a rational and technical process, and formulate policy goals on the basis that it satisfies certain minimum requirements. Others argue that we ought to pursue a more individualistic understanding of the consequence of policy, and consider more carefully the politics of the policy process. In the case of the EU and Turkey, these policies can be conceived of as aiming for Europeanisation, that is, processes broadly defined as political, policy, societal or discursive change towards the European mainstream.

The lens of historical institutionalism offers one way of explaining the uniformity in policy. Since the early 1990s, the EU has incrementally set out a strategy for engaging with civil society where each policy document built on the logic of the one preceding it. With each policy document, the selected policy approach gathers greater mass and reduces the space for alternative approaches to develop. In a sense, what the chronology of policy documents in this chapter charts is the gradual increase in institutional inertia, making alternative approaches less likely. This policy trajectory then forms the framework within which processes of policy Europeanisation take place during Turkey's accession negotiations also.

Additionally, the lens of rational choice institutionalism can help to explain the emergence of civil society dialogue as the new funding strategy, replacing the earlier policy of supporting rights-based NGOs directly. Although the stated aims of civil society dialogue – democratisation and building of vibrant civil society – have not completely changed from what they were previously, the manner in which this is to be achieved has. The assumption that actors' behaviour is governed by a "strategic

calculus” (Hall and Taylor 1996) would suggest that the policy shift towards civil society dialogue would incur lower political costs for incumbent governments and would therefore achieve improved compliance from governments. The policy on civil society dialogue has been framed differently from previous frameworks in that it is less confrontational. NGO actions, as far as the project domain is concerned, have been tamed by projects that fund the less confrontational activities

However, the subsequent chapters in this thesis question the extent to which the above understanding of how Europeanisation processes unfold is in fact supported by evidence. NGO funding has been increasingly engulfed by Europeanisation, and what follows investigates how NGO actors have experienced the effect of these processes and how they have reacted in response. The issues covered range from the nature of short-term project funding and complexity of accounting procedures to the introduction of domestic governmental actors as the new gatekeepers of EU civil society funds. The discrepancies between the content and implementation of EU civil society policy and the everyday experiences and practices of NGOs generate tension and dissatisfaction among the NGO community. However, as the final empirical chapter (Chapter Seven) demonstrates, these discrepancies also generate space for NGOs to develop coping strategies and opportunities for “benign manipulation” of project funding, leading to different policy outcomes from what was intended.

## 4 Civil Society in Turkey

This chapter provides a contextual background on the development of civil society in Turkey, and in so doing facilitates a transition from the theoretical and policy debates to the empirical discussion that will follow in the subsequent chapters. It endeavours to highlight the relevance of historical context in explaining how certain idiosyncrasies regarding the development of civil society have arisen. In particular, the chapter explores the historical bifurcation of civil society into “official” (secular, nationalist voices) and “informal” (non-secular, minority voices) sectors, and its consequences on the development of civil society in Turkey. Although somewhat crude as a distinction, this division remains a useful heuristic device to describe the outcomes of the radical modernisation and Westernisation processes instigated in the early years of the Turkish republic. The last three decades have seen tremendous growth in the size and role of civil society in Turkey, as well as in the variety of organisational forms. Yet, the attitudes underlying the earlier bifurcation still resonate in present day relationships within civil society, particularly within the critical debates on issues such as the role of religion in Turkish politics and society. Civil society in Turkey today is both heterogeneous and fragmented. These mixed dynamics, between the old black-and-white divisions and the new, increasingly multifarious character of civil society place Turkey into an unknown territory, where the opportunities offered by democratisation and EU accession are being dampened by the shortcomings that arise from the social divisions that still continue to exist in Turkish civil society. These political dynamics contribute to the unpredictable and uncertain nature of Europeanisation in Turkey.

The chapter therefore emphasises the importance of the particular path that civil society development has taken in Turkey. The recent history, as well as the broader social and political debates within which the idea of civil society is embedded, and where civil society operates, form the backdrop for the account of NGO behaviour that will be outlined in detail in the later chapters. This line of argumentation does not mean to suggest that the behaviour of NGOs in Turkey is *per se* unique, but rather to point out that there is a particular explanation for this behaviour that originates from the Turkish experience. NGOs in the older EU member states (Salgado) and in the more recent accession countries (Korkut 2002; Kuti 2006; Mendelson and Glenn 2002)

indeed exhibit similar behaviour in their approach to EU funding, and even the cases of Russia and the post-Soviet states offer several points of comparison (Cook and Vinogradova 2006; Crotty 2003; Hemment 2004; Henderson 2002; Ishkanian 2008; Richter 2002). The similarities stem from a similar relationship between the external environment that informs EU and the local, internal environment where NGOs operate. Faced with a new situation where the EU is asking NGOs to move beyond existing capacities and outside their comfort zones, NGOs respond by employing similar survival strategies that enable them to circumvent the anticipated policy outcomes. However, as chapters Five, Six and Seven illustrate, these resistance strategies interweave with various domestic ideological and political discourses to form local hybrid strategies. Therefore, whilst there are similarities in the character of the donor-NGO relationships that emerge in different contexts, the exact shape of the NGO response can be explained only by referring to the local socio-political context.

The chapter consists of four sections. The first part turns the clock back to a time when the ideas of the modern Turkish nation were first being formulated. The principles behind the modern republic and Turkish nation state-building created certain challenges on the way of civil societal development. The dual focus on eastern civilization and western culture contributed, in particular, to the bifurcation of the religious and secular elements in society. The situation, however, has undergone some far-reaching changes since the 1980s, and the impact of this transposition is the focus of the second section. In this period new, autonomous civil societal voices of all colours began to emerge, representing a break with the bifurcated divisions of the past. In particular, the state became gradually less vigorous in controlling the content of the official civil society. Yet, these new voices tended to retain some of the earlier uncompromising rhetoric. Thus, whilst the landscape of civil society has become increasingly colourful and varied, strong ideological divisions remain a salient characteristic of Turkish civil society.

Section three considers the impact of the EU accession process on the development of civil society. Efforts at Europeanisation underpin this section, as it looks at how domestic politics have responded to the opportunities and challenges delivered by the Europeanising forces that have been in play since the late 1980s. I argue that these developments have had, broadly speaking, an enabling effect on civil society. The EU has provided an external anchor for the claims NGOs have made, and by taking NGO activity seriously, the EU has legitimised their actions in the eyes of

the public. The final section explores the actors and recent events in Turkish civil society in more detail, beginning with an outline of how secular and Islamic camps have elected to position themselves in the currents of Europeanisation. It then looks at how the debates play out in the particular domain of the women's movement because the debates surrounding women's rights and women's role in society offer an entry-point to understanding how the debates on secularism and religion unfold in practice. The chapter finishes with a comment on the interplay between political culture and civil society.

#### **4.1 The Turkish Paradox**

The Turkish Republic that emerged in the 1920s continued the gargantuan task of turning the remnants of the Ottoman Empire into a modern, Westernised nation state. The emergent republic searched for a compromise between the Ottoman traditions that drew on Islamic history and culture and the far-reaching secular reforms that drastically broke away from this. The solution was to pursue the modernisation agenda in areas such as politics, law and governance, whilst in the spiritual, cultural and ethical domains Islamic traditions continued to flourish (as long as this did not interfere with the processes of modernisation). What emerged, then, was a public-private divide where politics, law and governance were within the public realm and religion was pushed out of the public and into the private realm. Many observers refer to this compromise as an apparent paradox in the development logic of the Turkish republic because the aim behind these measures – to contain religion as a political force – remained alien to large swathes of the population (Kadioğlu 1996; Keyman 1995; Parla 1985; Yavuz 2003; Yilmaz 2007; Kubicek 1999). From this emerge the later political tensions that continue to shape Turkish politics even today. Civil society was employed in managing this paradox, leading to a bifurcated, two-tier civil society where a relatively narrow band of organisations that were secular-minded or nationalist in their outlook was given scope to grow. This left other civil society actors to fend for themselves without state support (and often facing active state interference).

#### *“Turkish-Islamist-Westernist Modernism” as a formula for reform*

The ideas of Ziya Gökalp mark a starting point for an outline of the journey that Turkish civil society has taken since the formation of the Turkish Republic. Gökalp

(1876-1924) was a political philosopher from the Ottoman era who was among the early advocates of Turkish nationalism. In the post-Ottoman era his ideas became influential among the new elite as it was reconceptualising the path a modern Turkish Republic ought to take in the post-First World War setting where nationalist movements flourished across Europe, a time period Eric Hobsbawm describes as the “apogee of nationalism” (1990 p. 131). His unique contribution was a synthesis of a number of theoretical strands that together possessed a powerful resonance with the future direction of Turkey. His theory, entitled “Turkist-Islamist-Westernist Modernism”, gave each of these notions a role in society: “We are of the Turkish nation (*millet*), of the Islamic religious community (*ümmet*), of Western civilization (*medeniyet*)” (Parla 1985).

It seemed highly paradoxical to attempt to synthesise the Western and Islamic traditions in this way. The scientific and technological innovation of the West was somehow to be balanced with the spirituality of the East (Kadioğlu 1996 p. 719; Parla 1985). To reconcile the irreconcilable, and to resolve the paradox, he went on to make a distinction between culture and civilization. Culture, Gökalp argued, should remain intrinsic to Turkey and retain a domestic origin, whilst the ingredients for civilization could be borrowed from outside. In so doing it would be possible to utilise the technical and scientific innovation of the Western world as well as to protect the independence of the Turkish way of life. In this way, it was deemed possible to adopt Western institutions, values and norms so far as they were necessary for acquiring a modern, civilized society, whilst concurrently protecting traditional, national values from an outside influence (Parla 1985; Kubicek 1999). In practice, however, the synthesis has led to an unstable compromise where tensions periodically mount between the modernising reformists (secular) and traditionalists who resist change (Islamist).

Importantly, Gökalp’s ideas were a significant source of inspiration for the founder of the modern Turkish Republic, and its first president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Atatürk pursued an energetic reform agenda that adopted many of the Western values and norms on the one hand, whilst establishing the groundwork for a homogeneous, Turkish national identity on the other. In pursuit of civilizational reforms, the Turkish Republic adopted the Latin script; the fez was banned in favour of a European style headgear; the *Sharia* law was replaced by a legal code modelled on European examples; and as early as 1930 women were given the right to vote in

municipal elections, a right that was extended to national elections in 1934 (Poulton 1997).<sup>25</sup> The mould used to establish a modern Turkish civilization was clearly a European one. Above all, the process of secularisation was what defined the paradigm shift that was taking place. The highest political authority in Sunni Islam that functioned as a united voice for the Muslim Ummah, the Caliphate, was abolished. These powers were transferred to the newly established parliament, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Dodd 1992). Not only were relations between religion and state severed, but Islam was etatised by way of establishing the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), a state institution which to this day retains a regulatory oversight over all Muslim religious activities in Turkey (Yilmaz 2007). These reforms imported secular measures that seemed to bode well for the further development of civil society. It would be less likely that public issues, such as women's rights, would be curtailed on the grounds that they belonged to the domain of religion and were therefore not open to public debate. However, the extent to which the social fabric of Turkey was being ripped apart by the reforms meant the politicians and policymakers behind the programme had to be in total control in order to ensure the reforms were carried out. This in turn limited the possibilities for certain parts of civil society to grow.

Such elite domination of the reform process can also be found in Gökalp's writings on the subject. For him the nation had to be the prime mover in realising the Turkish-Islamist-Westernist balance, not individual reason. His ideas were greatly influenced by Durkheim, particularly by Durkheimian understanding of positivism and the belief that social processes can be studied (and controlled) through rational and scientific means. Gökalp also supported a solidaristic interpretation of social relations, where individuals would first and foremost serve the interests of the general will (Parla 1985). Gökalp's influence on the early Republican elite led to policies whereby the transformation of popular consciousness was going to be achieved through an elitist project conceived from above. Thus the question asked was not "who are the Turks" but rather "who are the Turks going to be" (Kadioğlu 1996 p. 179). The reforms were not an expression of an existing national consciousness, but rather an abstract construction that broke away from religiously or ethnically constructed models. The

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<sup>25</sup> By comparison, French women achieved these same rights in 1944, Italians in 1946 and Swiss women were given the right to vote in federal elections only in 1971.



ideas of a Turkish nation and a republican state became virtually synonymous, where social forces that deviated from the republican norms (but were otherwise legitimate) were squeezed out from public discussion (Seufert 2000). The reform process interpreted the general will in a very particular way.

Another element of the paradox arises from Turkey's ambivalent attitudes towards Westernisation. The desire to build a modern Turkish state in the image of Western civilizations has been counterpoised by a deep-seated suspicion of the West. This ambivalent attitude has become coined as the "Sèvres Syndrome". Although the Treaty of Sèvres, drawn up by the Allied powers in 1920 following the end of the First World War, was later nullified, it remains as a reminder in the Turkish social consciousness of the potential untrustworthiness of the West. In addition to the secession of Ottoman territories in the Middle East, the treaty divided most of present-day Turkey into zones of influence between the Allies (France, Britain and Italy), and ceded territory to Greece (in the west) and Armenia (in the east). Only central Anatolia and the Black Sea region in the north would have remained fully independent. These terms were deemed wholly unacceptable and formed one key determinant mobilising a series of guerrilla wars against the occupying forces. These culminated in the national resistance led by Mustafa Kemal in the victorious War of Independence (1919-1923). The end result was the Treaty of Lausanne, which annulled the earlier Treaty of Sèvres, retrieved the territories that the Treaty of Sèvres had given to Greece and Armenia (apart from the Dodecanese Islands on the Mediterranean), and recognised the present-day borders of Turkey. The lesson that Turkey took on board from this experience, argues Hakan Yilmaz, was that the Europeans saw Turks as illegitimate occupiers of lands that rightfully belonged to European-Christian people (Yilmaz 2006). The Sèvres Syndrome has had two deep policy imperatives: isolationism (never trust Western states or enter into economic, political or cultural pacts) and Westernisation without the West (modernise the state, military, economy and the society but never lose sight of the importance of isolationism) (Yilmaz 2006 p. 36). The nationalist and anti-Western attitudes, therefore, sat uneasily with the cosmopolitan civilizational agenda that looked to the West for inspiration. These mixed attitudes continue to inform the political debate around the processes of Europeanisation and how the accession negotiations in general are interpreted, an issue discussed more in section 4.3 of this chapter.

*Modernisation and a two-tier civil society*

The lack of a practical resolution to the inherent contradictions that arise from the merging of East and West has left its imprint on the development of civil society in Turkey. Gökalp and the early republican elite found a certain theoretical resolution to this dilemma in identifying two separate spheres of influence: Western influences were used as a guide to policy reform, whilst Eastern traditions remained relevant within the cultural sphere.

The resultant national identity was premised on secular Turkishness, forming a rather narrow overlap with other existing identities. Society was not deemed an aggregation of different interests but rather as a system where each individual was expected to abide by a particular interpretation of the general will. Ethnically or religiously informed identities in particular were sidelined (Seufert 2000). In the 1930s the six key principles of Kemalism were formulated. Enshrined in the constitution in 1937, these were formulated in order to define a hegemonic discourse that would ensure the success of the post-Ottoman nation building process (Poulton 1997). The six key principles of Kemalism are *republicanism* (rule of law, elected sovereigns, representative democracy), *secularism*, *populism* (elite working towards the best interests of society), *etatism* (state has central role in economic development), *nationalism* (one based on citizenship rather than ethnic origin) and *reformism* (introduction of modern institutions of governance that are constantly improved) (Kili 1980). Under the republican era Eastern traditions were gradually pushed away from the public sphere and firmly into the private domain.

The secular state and its governing discourse ended up being defined through a series of binaries, such as “progressive vs. conservative”; “modern vs. traditional”; “progress vs. backward”, delineating the social and political landscape in secular vis-à-vis non-secular terms (Keyman 1995). The essentialist nature of this language, which expresses the belief among the Kemalists that certain concepts were so important they should be taught methodically to all citizens, left virtually no room for alternative views to surface onto the public agenda. Civil society became to reflect these divisions between what was to be regarded as official (secular/Kemalist) civil society and the rest of civil society.

For the masses, however, this discourse was not entirely convincing, as they were unable to sympathise with the reformist logic. As the eminent Turkish sociologist, Şerif Mardin has commented:

The republic had not been able to propagate a social ethic that was sufficiently meaningful to the rural masses to enable them to react positively to its modernization drive. This was its main failing, and it was especially galling to the Muslim population of Turkey (Mardin 1995 p. 163)

Although Kemalist ideas and policies enjoyed a hegemonic position in Turkish society, this did not mean that alternative conceptions were not also a significant force. These remained alive and well in the private sphere of individuals. As Keyman has observed, the elite orientation of the reform movement meant that villages and particularly the Eastern part of the country, away from the centres of power, were much less likely to internalise the new values and norms (Keyman 1995). The dominance of Kemalism in public life meant that public expressions of difference, through mediums such as civil society, were not tolerated. Civil society, in this setting, found very little room to grow unless attached to the official Kemalist ideology. In this context, public expressions of an autonomous civil society were impossible.

*Political chronology: 1940s-1970s*

Up until 1946 the Turkish state functioned more or less as a single-party dictatorship. It was a case of “radical change first, democracy only later” (Dodd 1992). Atatürk in fact experimented with the idea of parliamentary democracy, by arranging the founding of an opposition party – the Free Party – to his own Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* – CHP) in 1930. The new party was overwhelmed by membership requests, breathing life into the smouldering discontent against the single-party state and fuelling mass demonstrations. Faced with such outcome, Atatürk withdrew his support, and the party was dissolved the same year it was founded (Dodd 1992; Weiker 1990). In 1946, Ismet İnönü, Turkey’s second president following the death of Atatürk in 1938, organised the first multi-party elections, which his party, the CHP, won comfortably. During the next four years however, the main opposition party, the Democrat’s Party (*Demokrat Partisi* – DP), did their homework and were well prepared for the 1950 elections (Sunar 2004).

In 1950, the DP won a landslide victory in the general election. The DP stood for a less militant form of secularism than the CHP, and were seen as the champions of the people with a large slice of their vote coming from the rural peasantry (Tachau and

Good 1973). The DP won convincingly again in the 1954 general election, but its gradual downfall began in 1955. Adnan Menderes, the prime minister, began to assume – much like the CHP before the DP – that the government constituted the state. For example, he denied the CHP airtime on the radio on the grounds that radio was an “organ of the state” (Dodd 1992 p. 20). This was combined with reduced popularity due to worsening economic performance. Relations between the government and the opposition gradually deteriorated, until on May 27<sup>th</sup> 1960 the military stepped in, masterminding a coup d’état. Despite the undemocratic end to the period, the 1950s marked the emergence of civil society as an actor in Turkey’s political dynamics. One sign of this was the establishment of the first labour federation, the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (*Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu – TÜRK-İŞ*), in 1952. The TÜRK-İŞ represented anticommunism, patriotism and non partisanship, retaining a non-political stance wherever possible (Blind 2007). In the 1950s society began to emerge as an “independent entity” in Turkey (Sunar 2004 p. 54), able to flex its muscle in support of political parties of its own choosing.

Following the 1960 coup, hundreds of DP political activists were arrested and Adnan Menderes together with two close associates were executed. In 1961, prior to the elections, the DP was outlawed. In the four years that followed, clumsy coalition governments between the CHP and the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi – AP*) struggled to agree on economic and domestic policy whilst operating under the military’s watchful eye. In 1965 the AP, the political descendant of the DP, won a clear majority and was able to bring temporary stability to Turkish politics. However, the AP was soon struggling to manage the new Right-Left politics that were entering Turkey’s political stage (Sunar and Sayarı 1986). Influenced by the leftist student movements in Europe, particularly France, the youthful activists on both sides of the Right-Left continuum engaged in increasingly violent acts. In 1967, the TÜRK-İŞ stepped in to quell a strike organised by a group of factory workers and expelled the unions involved in the strike. This led to the establishment of the Revolutionary Labour Unions Confederation of Turkey<sup>26</sup> (*Türkiye Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu – DİSK*), which pursued a more political, independent and socialist line of action in its operations (Blind 2007). In 1970 the more radical leftist groups decided that agitation in itself was not enough, and a more systematic campaign of terrorism was required to destabilise the country

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<sup>26</sup> Also translated as the “Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey”

(Zürcher 2005). A wave of bombings, bank robberies and kidnappings ensued. Nationalist groups on the right responded, soon matching the leftist movement in levels of violence. University campuses were brought to a standstill and factories shut due to strikes. By 1971, the military establishment, convinced that the government was not able to contain the increasing violence, issued a military memorandum and on March 12<sup>th</sup> the AP-led government resigned. The 1960s in Turkey thus witnessed how civil society entered the political arena with a bang. By the early 1970s, the military had intervened and forced civil society to retreat back into the trenches. From here on, the military and secularist elite regarded freely organised civil society as a potential threat to Turkey's political stability.

Between 1971 and 1980, there were two elections and ten different governments in Turkey. Three quarters of voters supported one of the two main parties, the CHP led by Bülent Ecevit, and the AP led by Süleyman Demirel. Yet, it was the two right-wing fringe parties, Necmettin Erbakan's National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi* – MSP) that supported fundamentalist Islamic principles and Arpaslan Türkeş' ultranational and pro-fascist Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* – MHP) that held the balance of power in the rickety coalition governments (Gunther 1989). To consolidate their positions, the MHP launched the Nationalist Labour Union's Confederation (*Milliyetçi İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* – MİSK) in 1970, to be followed in 1976 by the MSP launching its own labour federation, the Confederation of Turkish Just Workers' Union (*Hak İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* – HAK-İŞ). These unstable times witnessed a return to political violence, which escalated in the late 1970s. The youth movements at the extreme ends of the Left-Right continuum had no problem in recruiting new members among the discontented youth that were unemployed or unable to enter university due to lack of places. In January 1980, members of the DİSK clashed with military troops in Izmir, sending a ripple effect through the city, sparking several new clashes as students joined in on the fight (Gunther 1989). The events culminated in the assassination of a former Prime Minister Nihat Erim by leftist terrorist groups, to which their right-wing counterparts responded by murdering Kemal Türkler, the former President of the DİSK. Eventually the army responded by carrying out a coup d'état on September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1980. By this time society was saturated by such tense political activity between the far left and far right forces that twenty people were killed each day due to political violence (Heper 1985).

#### **4.2 Year 1980 as watershed: multi-tiered civil society**

In the aftermath of the 1980 military coup, an increasing plurality of voices began gradually to find space within civil society. In an answer to the political tensions that had gripped Turkey, there was a conscious shift in focus from defending the Kemalist project from religious and ethnic divergence to actively depoliticising society. Politically motivated civil society activity was believed to have contributed to the civil violence that preceded the coup, and action was taken to prevent the politicisation of associations and unions in the future (Dodd 1992 p. 23). For example, the DİSK, the MİSK and the HAK-İŞ had their bank accounts frozen and were each assigned military appointed administrators (Blind 2007).

In its efforts to re-align the political spectrum in a way that would destabilise the left-right divisions, the military junta found a useful ally in moderate Sunni Islam. The purpose of the alliance was to quell the Marxist and Fascist movements, and begin to stabilise social relations. This policy was framed as the “Turkish-Islamic Synthesis”, aiming to utilise Islam in the struggle against Kurdish nationalists and leftists in particular. To this end, the significance of Islamic values was emphasised within the official government discourse (Kadioğlu 1996). A policy of active support was realised by encouraging the establishment of Imam Hatip Schools (Kubicek 1999). These were vocational schools with an emphasis on religious education, and led to the establishment of several civil society associations for the purposes of their management (Grigoriadis 2009 p. 50). By this point the Islamic movement also benefited from the efforts of a well educated and adaptable leadership, which was able to negotiate a rhetorical path between traditional values and modernism, and thus make the most of this new-found political legitimacy (Yavuz 2003; Kubicek 1999). Religious intellectuals were thus able to offer an increasingly persuasive synthesis of tradition and modernism and were able to launch a more politicised campaign in its support. The emergence of political Islam as a key force in Turkish politics has been perhaps the most significant long-term outcome of the 1980 coup.<sup>27</sup>

Global market forces and the logic of liberal market economics entered Turkey in the 1980s, punching holes in the insular and protective economic policies that had dominated until then. Both the 1960 and 1980 coups were preceded by financial crisis

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<sup>27</sup> This Islamic dimension will be reviewed in more detail in section 4.4 of this chapter.

initiated by populist cycles in government spending and in both scenarios the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was the key player supporting the post-crisis economic recovery (Keyman and Öniş 2007). In 1980 Turkey began the implementation of a series of long-term structural neo-liberal reforms. Trade liberalisation, privatisation and a growth in exports were three of the key drivers behind the market-based reforms (Öniş and Şenses 2007 p. 15) and by the mid-1980s Turkey had received five consecutive structural adjustment loans from the World Bank (WB) and become the number one recipient of structural funds from the IMF. Turkey was even regarded as a particularly successful example of a country that had adopted a structural adjustment programme (Keyman and Öniş 2007 p. 107; Mosley et al. 1991 p. 9). Economic liberalisation was another factor that contributed towards a more open political system where the claims made by the Kemalist elite to represent a universal ideology for the whole of Turkey was becoming increasingly unconvincing:

The political climate that prevailed in the 1980s and the early 1990s has opened the Kemalist Pandora's box out of which have emerged multiple identities making references to the different sets of Islam and the Kurds (Kadioğlu 1996 p. 192).

These linkages between economic development, political pluralism and growth of civil society in Turkey echo the ideas first developed by the theorists reviewed in Chapter Two – Ferguson, Hegel and de Tocqueville – who saw civil society as growing out of commercial and industrial development.

*The “autonomisation” and “essentialisation” of civil society*

Hence the transition witnessed in the 1980s was one from “confrontation to tolerance” (Göle 1994 p. 213). Through the relative autonomisation of economic activities, political groups and cultural identities, an autonomous civil society began to develop, shifting the focus increasingly from state to society. Instead of questioning or supporting the legitimacy of the ruling regime, the debate focused on particular policies. One component of this change was the rise of a new kind of “technocratic elite” among Islamic intellectuals whose rhetoric synthesised Islamic values with the values of the modern Turkish state. In addition women, gay activists and environmentalists were successful in carving out new spaces for themselves within civil society and making louder demands on the government. What followed was not a

depoliticisation, argues Göle, but “politics of different style” where people of differing political opinions would frequent the same coffeehouses and engage in debate that no longer ended in stalemate (1994 p. 219-20).

However, despite an increasingly autonomised civil society, other elements of civil societal activity have not seen a matching change. Fuat Keyman, for example, does not think that the nature of the debate changed. Like Göle, Keyman agrees that there are now an increasing number of voices able to stake their claim through civil society, challenging the cultural homogeneity of the past. Yet, he asserts that the debate is still conducted in a binary-seeking, essentialist spirit (Keyman 2000). The emergent particular discourses should all constitute part of an array of discourses coexisting in a pluralist civil society. Instead, the Islamist discourse, for example, tends towards the formation of a new singularity, a new “totalizing discourse” that aims to replace the universal discourse of the Kemalists with another (Keyman 1995 p. 71). Consequently, civil society has emerged as the new battle ground where the debate has retained its essentialist nature, the Kemalist and Islamic groups leading the charge.

What can we learn from comparing these two points of view? Göle, wearing her sociologist’s hat, focuses on the detail – on the behaviour and agency of the individual. Keyman, a political scientist, focuses on the broader, structural terrain and outlines what he deems to be the salient points in the story for civil society. It is plausible to argue that Turkey in the post-1980 period has witnessed both trajectories of development. Civil society has been both autonomised and essentialised. From the point of view of a liberal democratic political discourse, commented on in Chapters Two and Three, and on which EU policies as a donor institution are largely based, this simultaneous autonomisation and essentialisation generates both opportunities and shortcomings. On the one hand, civil society has become an increasingly pluralist force, where various minority interests and issues are represented. Such voices – whether Islamic, gay or environmental – have gained legitimacy as autonomous actors who are listened to and for whom it may be possible to influence government policy (Kadioğlu 1996). These kinds of developments offer opportunities, in particular for the potential success of EU civil society policy in Turkey. On the other hand, despite the increasing number of voices within civil society, it is not certain that these new actors will behave in a democracy-enhancing way. The new autonomous voices in civil society phrase issues in essentialist language, where demands are made in an uncompromising style. Thus for example a women’s group, which focuses on gender



issues in their work, will also define their position along the secular-Islamic axes, although the issues themselves would not require this. To view this in Gramscian terms, the essentialist debate mirrors the struggles between hegemonic and counterhegemonic ideas, and supports the view that civil society in Turkey is best conceptualised as a battlefield where contested ideas are tested out.

The story of Turkey's post-1980s pluralist civil society has two trends, and it is important to keep a focus on both: the autonomisation of civil society, as well as the essentialisation of civil society rhetoric. This should not be surprising, given that civil society has so far had a relatively short time to develop in Turkey. What is more, civil society is required to operate within an environment with a weak traditions of philanthropy and giving (this domestic landscape of giving is elaborated on in Chapter Six). Doing so will help to keep an eye on both the opportunities and shortcomings, to understand the political struggles that are played out in civil society, and therefore recognise the potential limits of the EU accession process from the point of view of civil society.

### **4.3 The EU pre-accession phase**

Europeanisation remains an important concept in explaining social change in Turkey over the past two decades. The effect of Europeanisation has been to change the context in which state-society relations are being negotiated in Turkey because such external criteria limit the ability of national political actors to maintain their hegemonic positions (Keyman and Icduygu 2003). These outside forces have, for example, had a significant role in breaking up a previously homogenised culture, contributing in turn to the emergence of local identities (Kadioğlu 1996). Since Turkey's membership in the Council of Europe in 1949, and later when Turkey's ambitions to accede to the EU sprang out of the starting blocks, Turkish policy has been notably influenced by the recommendations made by the EU (Karaosmanoğlu 1994). EU civil society policy in Turkey, which was outlined in some detail in Chapter Three, can be regarded as an extension of these broader aims that seek to change the state-centred nature of Turkish politics and policymaking.

Although the Turkish case may not qualify for the classical definition of Europeanisation as member countries adapting to various rules and norms of the European Union, the criteria Turkey faces as a candidate country leads to virtually identical challenges. The processes of fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria and

attempting to harmonise the various chapters in the pre-accession negotiations equate with the policy Europeanisation and political Europeanisation as described by Thomas Diez and colleagues (Diez et al. 2005). Policy Europeanisation, in a nutshell, amounts to the changes that are taking place as a result of Turkey's gradual adoption of the EU policy framework (the EU *acquis*). This consists of the one-way imposition of particular policies and political structures – spreading the European norms on policy design. Political Europeanisation refers to the integration of executive and administrative structures, how to improve the efficiency and decision-making in policy, as per European standards, and ensuring that the policy reforms are successfully implemented. This view of Europeanisation therefore resonates more with rational choice institutionalism and historical institutionalism, which both emphasise the role and impact of European institutions in determining how domestic processes of Europeanisation unfold. Potentially, these processes alter the domestic political and societal context of Turkey in important ways. From a civil society point of view, the adoption of European norms opens up new fields of activities, which either take place in the expanded societal space that is made available to them, or makes use of the new policy language that has been introduced. The reform process offers new opportunities for civil society to wield influence.

However, NGOs are also an object of Europeanisation themselves. They are expected not only to benefit from a Europeanised social and political setup that is more conducive to civil societal activity, but also to internalise the European norms within their own behaviour and as such, be themselves Europeanised. Often those commenting on EU impact on civil society focus on the structural and political improvements that contribute to an environment where NGOs are more able to act. In addition, this thesis also asks how processes of Europeanisation affect NGOs directly, how organisations respond to these processes, and in doing so reflects the sociological institutionalist approach to Europeanisation.

#### *Reform, civil society and Europeanisation*

The reform process in relation to EU accession, therefore, raises interesting questions about the role of civil society. Are NGOs merely following in the slipstream of an accession process directed by the EU, and taking advantage of the opportunities brought about by consequences of democratic reform? Or is the role of NGOs integral to seeing through the democratic reform process successfully? It is clear that much of

Turkey's reform process has been motivated by the EU, evident from the wave of policy reforms that began in the aftermath of the 1999 candidacy status: between 2001 and 2004, in a mere two and a half years, no less than nine constitutional reform packages were passed through parliament (Müftüler-Baç 2005). Primarily, Europeanisation has appeared in the form of pressures emanating from a potential EU membership upon the administrative institutions at the centre of government. This is not surprising: when Turkey became a candidate country the next logical step was to undertake wide-ranging political reforms in order to begin accession negotiations. In this sense, Europeanisation has thus far been interpreted largely as democratisation, and the EU incentive has been tremendously successful. This equates, more or less, to the policy and political Europeanisation referred to by Diez and colleagues above. The debate, however, has been relatively limited to the field of high politics where civil society has played less of a role. The next challenge, Müftüler-Baç notes, is to ensure that the political reforms are actually adopted and implemented (Müftüler-Baç 2005). In essence, what she is referring to is societal Europeanisation, internalisation of the policy and political Europeanisation that has so far taken place. It may be, therefore, that from the point of view of civil society actors, the real work is only about to begin.

Some observers give more weight to the role of civil society in the accession process. Paul Kubicek, for example, describes the combined efforts of the EU and Turkish civil society as a pincer that pushed forward the reform agenda, illustrating how civil society organisations have played an instrumental role in taking forward the political reform process within the domestic realm (Kubicek 2005). Nathalie Tocci in turn asks the question whether the accession process has been the trigger for reform, or whether domestic actors have merely used the EU as an external anchor upon which to hinge their efforts. What happens is in the end dependent on the role of domestic actors, emphasising the importance of endogenous processes in supporting democratisation and modernisation in Turkey (Tocci 2005). Turkish NGO activists themselves have highlighted the ability of the EU to introduce additional points onto the agenda<sup>28</sup> and the impact the EU has had in terms of creating space for new issues.<sup>29</sup> NGOs and other civil society actors make good use of the new opportunities presented to them as the EU accession process continues.

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Istanbul, 16 August 2007. [C6]

<sup>29</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Diyarbakir, 01 July 2008. [C11]

The nature of Europeanisation in the context of accession-related reform therefore says something interesting about the role of civil society in the pre-accession process. Civil society can function as a pincer, for example, influencing the processes and content of political and policy Europeanisation. In other words, societal Europeanisation has already taken place at least in some level, as civil society actors are advocating for further Europeanising changes. The second issue to consider is how to get from policy- and political Europeanisation to societal Europeanisation. Here NGOs could be involved in carrying the process of Europeanisation from merely changing laws to being internalised by society at large. In equal measure NGOs may actively resist these processes and argue against further harmonisation along the European lines. Both sides of the debate are reflected in the domestic political arena.

What motivates domestic decision-makers such as politicians to engage in Europeanisation processes? As Kubicek asks, is the reform predicated on it being appropriate (it is the right thing to do), or leading to the right consequences (it has to be done for EU membership)? He leans towards the latter, since the costs of compliance would otherwise be too high: too much ground would be yielded to minority groups without political gains (Kubicek 2005). Such issues are underlined by the fact that the short-term costs of reform look relatively high when weighed against the long-term gains of membership, especially when one considers the uncertainty over the eventual outcome of the accession negotiations (Tocci 2005). The commitment to the reforms is then, perhaps, somewhat erratic.

These difficult assessments have been confounded by the election results since 2002, and the reshuffling of political positions that has followed. It was in 2002 that the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP), the political party with an Islamic genealogy came to power. This has added an interesting dynamic to the whole process. Politics in the AKP era present a paradox: the political party representing the conservative and Islamic interests in society, with a tradition of opposing Europeanisation, has become its strongest supporter. At the same time, the Kemalist elite, the former moderniser, has withdrawn their unreserved support for the European project. A long-term transition in the Islamic rhetoric has enabled the AKP to be able to adopt this position. Today, it is very adept at synthesising economic and political pragmatism with more traditional concerns for social justice and traditional values. By claiming initiative on the EU agenda, the AKP has been able to anchor itself in the heartland of political centre-left, and gain votes from the liberal elite of

Turkey as well as from the new middle classes that have benefited from the export-oriented policies of the AKP (Wiltse 2008; Pamuk 2008). The European anchor has encouraged the AKP to pursue moderate political and economic policies. In the Kemalist circles these efforts by the AKP are claimed to amount to nothing more than a sleight of hand, where the democratisation efforts pursued via the EU are seen to have been motivated by the AKP desire to weaken the secular state and military in Turkey. The ultimate aim of AKP politics, the Kemalists argue, is to introduce a social order which is compatible with Islamic traditions (for some Kemalists this means the introduction of Sharia law). In its political calculus, the AKP deems the EU to be a lesser opponent than the secular establishment in Turkey, leading many secularists to remain sceptical of the zeal behind the AKP efforts at democratisation. On another front, in an effort to garner populist votes, many Kemalist politicians have tapped into the nationalist backlash against the EU that has swept across Turkey in recent years. They have adopted a more critical stance on the EU, accusing it of making unreasonable demands and being disingenuous in its efforts to include Turkey. These changes in the political discourse at the top have meant that the notion of who in Turkey is being Europeanised has shifted, together with the notion of who defines or stakes a claim on what Europeanisation means and where it will lead Turkey (Müftüler-Baç 2005). The EU accession process is thus intricately entangled in Turkey's domestic politics.

Europeanisation has certainly pushed for change both in terms of policy and politics, which in turn has led to a deeper commitment to the realisation of democratic reforms. It has helped CSOs by pushing forward a favourable agenda, for the reforms have meant that civil society has more space to make its case, as well as providing an external anchor around which domestic actors have been able to hook their demands for change. On the flip side, the exposure to external policy influences has raised suspicions in line with the Sèvres syndrome. Those who have seen their stakes reduced as a result of the Europeanisation process are likely to be less supportive, and there are of course those CSOs and NGOs that would echo such sentiments.

#### **4.4 Shades of civil society in Turkey**

This section aims to trace the civil societal developments since 1980 in more detail, exploring different perspectives. The first two parts consider the role of Islam and secularism in shaping civil society, and the third explores the nature of the women's

movement in more detail. The final part offers examples from relations between Turkey's political culture and civil society in order to illustrate further how politics affects civil societal development in Turkey.

Throughout this chapter, as well as the rest of the thesis, it is useful to keep in my mind that active civil society – in the sense that the EU perceives civil society – is a relatively new development. As the above sections have shown, it has only been in the last 20 years that NGOs have begun to operate in larger numbers. Society is gradually getting used to the existence of these organisations, but they are still regarded with suspicion among governmental institutions (see Chapter Five), and the tradition of giving has not evolved in tandem with the growth in civil societal activism.

### *Islam and civil society*

From the early years of the Republic until the early 1980s, Islam was deliberately confined to the outskirts of the state. The Islamist vision of a single Islamic community that would transcend nation states was promptly challenged by the vigour of Turkish nationalism. Islam was presented with a role as the common denominator for the Turkish nation, rather than the Muslim Umma (Kadioğlu 1996). In response to this, political Islam shifted from state to society, where it emerged as a radical political ideology that raised its head during the times of political upheaval in the 1960s and late 1970s. Until the 1980s, the principal aim of political Islam was to resist the modernisation efforts of the secular elite, recapture the state and to re-introduce Islamic rule in Turkey (Yilmaz 2007). Religiously motivated civil society groups had very little room to manoeuvre between the radicalised Islamic political agenda and the secular state determined to restrain the Islamic political groups.

In the post-1980 era however, the Islamic political agents in Turkey have changed their position. Their identity has shifted to become more accepting of modernity, rephrasing modernity in Islamic terms that offers a credible challenge to the Kemalist interpretation. The political element of Islam is no longer categorically radicalised. The new discourse has been able to challenge the hegemony of the secular nation state whilst embracing the legal framework of the democratic and pluralistic parameters. This does not mean that the entire Islamic movement has shifted towards a new direction, but rather that it has become more fragmented, pulling in various directions (Yavuz 2003). This variety reflects increasing opportunities and space for Islamic civil society activity, and has paved the way for a variety of women's group to

emerge, for example. Both Yilmaz and Yavuz observe that the key challenge going forward is to find ways to expand the public sphere that make it possible to integrate the modern Muslim identities within it. Doing so is likely to reduce the social polarisation that currently exists, and to reduce political upheaval. Civil society organisations are potentially a key player in any such reconciliation efforts.

The Fethullah Gülen movement is probably the most interesting example of modern Islamic thinking in Turkey. Their approach to Islam has been heavily influenced by the *Nurcu* movement, referring to those following the writings of Said Nursi (1877-1961). A prominent religious authority, Nursi's writings gained widespread popularity through Turkish society in the 1950s, despite best efforts by the state to prevent this (Aras and Caha 2000). A key premise behind the *Nurcu* and Fethullah Gülen movement is the belief that religion and science are not irreconcilable, but rather the rationality of science and spirituality of religion compliment each other (Yavuz 1999). Neither is it necessary, nor helpful to speak of a clash between East and West, these modern Islamic scholars assert (Aras and Caha 2000). Democracy and Islam are not contradictory. This happy marriage between tradition and modernity resonates strongly with the views advocated by the forefather of Turkish nationalist, Ziya Gökalp. In doing so the movement is publicly subordinating itself to the dominant discourse on Turkishness that is based on nationalism and secularism, to the extent that it upholds the primacy of the nation state over individual rights. On this point of nationalist undertones the Gülen movement diverts from the mainstream *Nurcu* movement. However, by embracing a general discourse based of human rights and democracy, the Gülen movement has also been able to question the exclusivity of the Kemalist worldview in terms that cannot be ignored. Fethullah Gülen has been spearheading a movement that encourages Muslims to become more involved in the social political life of Turkey without compromising their Islamic identity in order to do so. This is possible, they argue, as long as a dialogue exists between Muslim and secular elements of society. The Gülen movement is a prime example of how religiously motivated associational activity has become increasingly commonplace in Turkey, and poses a difficult hurdle for those who see increased Islamicisation of society as a problem.

The hybridity of Islamist CSOs between traditional and modern identities is a theme that has been observed elsewhere as well. In a study of modern Islamic civil society groups, Jenny White describes the characteristics of the local associations in

Ümraniye, a relatively poor and conservative district of Istanbul (White 1996). One association in Ümraniye that White refers to has been organised around religion, but this is not its *raison d'être*. The members of the association describe it as a “People’s School” (*Halk Okulu*), staffed by amateur volunteer teachers who provide training for both secular and religious women. The association also represents the needs of the community to the municipal government. The association, argues White, fits neither the Western model of an NGO (a human rights, or a women’s rights group, for example), nor is it purely an Islamic community-based organisation. This encourages rethinking of our categories when classifying civil society organisations into the boxes of modern and traditional.

A recent research project that reviewed the agendas and views of three Islamic human rights NGOs in Turkey suggests a range of approaches as to how religious and modern concerns might be reconciled. Two of the organisations, AK-DER and ÖZGÜR-DER, were formed primarily as single-issue organisations in response to the ban on wearing headscarves at universities in 1997. Both of these organisations have consciously avoided any engagement with the political debates and with political parties (Kadioğlu 2005). Although refusal to engage with the democratic political mechanisms may lead one to question the democratic commitment of the NGOs, Kadioğlu argues that this is more a reflection on the inadequacies of the political system. MAZLUM-DER, on the other hand, a Muslim human rights organisation with a broader range of issues under its mandate, is much more open to diverse views on the issue of the headscarf ban, and willing to engage in a discussion with political forces on the matter. There is evidence of pragmatism here that was absent in the case of the first two NGOs.

A modern Islamic element to Turkish civil society has been evolving, which is synthesising together the dichotomies of a modern, progressive, democracy-yearning movement and a conservative, traditional movement with an authoritative agenda. However, one cannot speak of a unified movement. The Islamic civil society in Turkey consists on the one hand of organisations styled on the Western model of NGOs, as outlined by Kadioğlu’s study. The organisations vary in their reactions to the challenge posed by the existing political system. On the other hand, local municipal organisations are able to marry both old and new in their operations, providing services with a communitarian spirit but with an open mind that broadens the associations beyond any particular religious boundary. These ideas correspond with the notion of



Muslim civil society as society with ethics put forward in Chapter Two, dealing with concepts such as social solidarity. In other words, whilst there is clearly some common ground between Western ideas about civil society and how civil society manifests itself in the Muslim context, these commonalities are better understood along communitarian lines than liberal democratic lines. Existing ideas about liberal democracy and the nature of civil society prevalent in EU civil society policy are limited in their ability to make sense of the various ways in which Turkish NGOs operate.

#### *Secularism and civil society*

In the post-1980 environment, the state rhetoric of Kemalism found itself increasingly questioned and under pressure to adapt. The emergence of a variety of new voices within civil society exposed Kemalism as a clunky way to look at the world, particularly since the post-Cold War world no longer valued authoritarian solutions. Thus methods that had worked in 1960, 1971 and 1980 in the form of coups d'état were likely to have much more significant negative consequences after 1980. In this context, CSOs became an important vehicle for adapting Kemalism to manage the new balance of power in the 1990s and 2000s.

To illustrate the change, we can look at an example of a rhetorical shift in regard to civil society, where traditional Kemalist position has lost ground. As has already been alluded to, Turkish nationalism and Kemalism have been deemed crucial in explaining what kind of behaviour is to be regarded as civil, and thus acceptable within the realm of CSOs (Seufert 2000). Turkish nationalism and Kemalism constituted the common denominator to which appropriate civil society activism should adhere to. It was aimed to legitimate certain type of behaviour within civil society that coincided with the cultural and civilizational (in terms of Westernisation and modernisation) aims of the Kemalist state elite. Whilst during the unstable 1950s, 1960s and 1970s this may have been justifiable, it was less so in the post-1980 context.

In the mid-1980s Turkey's Prime Minister Turgut Özal criticised these civilizational aims because they did not amount to a "civilianizational" aim (Evin 1994). This is an important terminological distinction in Turkish, for the word "civil"

(*sivil*) indicates that something is non-military.<sup>30</sup> In other words, when Özal was suggesting that Turkish policy must pursue convergence between being civilised and being civilian, he meant that Turkish policymaking should no longer tiptoe around the military and prioritise society instead. At the time policy failed on this account because the military elite continued to judge civilian behaviour not on its own merits, but on the basis of how it reflects a Kemalist reading of acceptable behaviour. The statement was a direct challenge to the political role played by the military, also questioning the legitimacy of the authoritarian, or militaristic, aspects of the Kemalist position. Was the state justified in its top-down imposition of the Kemalist worldview? As the authoritarian version of Kemalism was losing its legitimacy, particularly in the face of an increasingly pluralist civil society, the Kemalist movement also began to shift in the direction of civil societal space.

The emergence of Kemalist NGOs can therefore be seen as a move to rearticulate the Kemalist rhetoric in a more civilian version of itself. It can be regarded as a response to a perceived threat, where NGOs are appropriating the civil societal space to pursue long-term goals with negative outcomes for the Turkish republic, Islamic NGOs being a case in point (Erdoğan 2000). The Kemalist civil society movement has thus sought to reinstate the hegemony of Kemalism and to create popular support for the ideas of nationalism and secularism that hold it up. The authoritarianism of the past needs to be remoulded into a persuasive argument. The role of the Kemalist NGO has become one of parroting the behaviour of the authoritarian Kemalist state, perceiving of themselves as the civil society responsible for protecting the ideology of the state (Erdoğan 2000).

The events surrounding the “post-modern coup” of 1997 help to illustrate the relationship between Kemalist civil society and the state in more detail. Coined the “28 February process”, the coup originated in the unprecedented electoral success of the Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* - RP) in the December 1996 election. During the subsequent tug-of-war between the new government on one side and the secular state elite and military on the other, the RP was ousted from power. In early 1997, on February 28<sup>th</sup>, the National Security Council (NSC) issued a statement making a series of recommendations for government policy. These included turnarounds on aspects of

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<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of how this distinction between “civil” and “non-military” affects Turkish definitions of “civil society” (*sivil toplum*), see Seckinelgin (2004).

religious policy that had been advocated since the early 1980s, as the NSC called for restrictions in religious activism and curbs on educational establishments run by religious entities (such as Imam Hatip schools). The government refused to act upon these recommendations and was eventually forced to resign, and in January 1998 the RP was shut down and its operations deemed illegal (Karaman and Aras 2000). From May 1997 onwards trade unions, professional groups and women's groups – for example – joined in what became coined as the battle to save secularism and democracy as well as to protect the Turkish nation with its Atatürkian heritage (Seufert 2000). Two leading Kemalist NGOs, the Association for Kemalist Thought (*Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği* – ADD) and the Association for the Support of Modern Life, (*Çağdaş Yaşam Destekleme Derneği* – ÇYDD), conducted joint press conferences in favour of overthrowing the RP government. Together with a number of Labour Unions they joined the “Union of Non-Governmental Organisations” (*Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları Birliği*), signing a joint declaration against the “anti-democratic and anti-laic acts” of the government (Erdoğan 2000 p. 256). What is more, the members of the NSC actively solicited this support from civil society, arranging meetings with the heads of the Kemalist NGOs. These organisations then took part in the public discussion in the media and took to the streets in protest, all in order to legitimise the anti-government position established by the NSC. This example is a pertinent illustration of how civil society participation in political debates unfolds along Gramscian lines.

Kemalist civil society remains active in this role. Almost exactly ten years later, on Sunday May 13th, 2007, a mass demonstration was arranged in Izmir, attracting a staggering 1.5 million people. This was the third demonstration of its kind in six weeks, with similar events having been arranged in Ankara and Istanbul previously. The purpose of the organisers was to demonstrate against the nomination of Abdullah Gül as AKP's presidential candidate. As the presidential election was conducted by the parliament, and the AKP enjoyed an overall majority in parliament, the parliamentary vote to confirm Gül's nomination was expected to be a mere formality. Critically, his wife wore a headscarf, which to many seemed incongruous with what the presidency represented in Turkey: its incumbent had, since Atatürk himself, been a bastion of Turkish secularism. Yet in fact, the demonstrators were mobilised for a variety of reasons apart from secular concerns: unemployment, economic hardship, or dissatisfaction with government in particular areas such as

gender or the rights of sexual minorities. Even devout Muslims joined in the demonstrations.<sup>31</sup> Despite the heterogeneous and ambiguous cast, the public rhetoric that emerged from the demonstrations was crystal clear. An opinion piece from the Turkish Daily News (TDN) newspaper cuts to the heart of the public debate:

Turkish nation [...] will not give up pursuing the principles of Atatürk. Turkey is a whole and unity is its fundamental characteristic [...] the nation demands to claim secularism and democracy (Kilercioğlu 2007).

In other words, this rhetoric perceived that the actions of the demonstrators were protecting all three of the following: secularism, the whole of the nation, and the unity of the nation. However, as Levent Köker opined at the time, the argument behind the demonstrations was somewhat paradoxical. The claim was to protect the unity and wholeness of Turkey, but this was defined in a particular, narrow way. The unity was in being protected from a section of Turkey's citizenry. The only way not to see this as paradoxical was to redefine citizenship to include only the like-minded (secular) individuals and exclude others (Köker 2007).

Finally, in 2008, the Turkish political circle was gripped by the events in the Ergenekon trials. Although at the time of writing the trials are still ongoing, the allegations point to a clandestine ultra-nationalist organisation called Ergenekon that reportedly planned to bring down the government and to assassinate prominent intellectuals. The alleged plans were part of an effort to preserve Turkish nationalism and laicism. The investigations have unearthed plans by Ergenekon to create civil society organisation with the aim of moulding public opinion (Zaman 2008a). Searches of the homes of retired army generals found a report containing detailed minutes from meetings where CSOs participated, wittingly or unwittingly collaborating in their plans. Subsequently, two former university rectors and one current rector were detained. Two organisations were also implicated as the chairwoman of ÇYDD and the deputy chairman of ADD were briefly detained (Zaman 2008b). Although the details remain murky, the Ergenekon case seems to crystallise some of the arguments made here in their extreme form, by exhibiting a movement struggling to protect the

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<sup>31</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti (2010) "Secularism Contested: Debate and Dissent in Turkey". Paper read at the *Turkish Contemporary Studies Seminar Series*, London School of Economics, London, 15 February 2010.

secular/Kemalist legacy of Turkey, and appropriating the civil societal space in an effort to achieve this.

#### *Women's movement*

Throughout the history of the Turkish Republic, women's issues headlined the project of modernising and civilizing Turkey. Women's formal emancipation was achieved early, as part of the legal reforms that followed the establishment of the secular republic in 1923. The adoption of a new Civil Code in 1926 made polygamy illegal, gave women equal rights to divorce and to the custody of children. In 1930 women were given the right to vote in local elections and from 1934 women could vote in national elections, as well as hold public offices. These rights were not achieved through women's activism, however, but were granted by an "enlightened governing elite committed to the goals of modernization and 'Westernization'" (Kandiyoti 1987 p. 320). Whilst for some these developments were inevitable steps to achieving democracy and civil society in the Turkish context, others have interpreted women's rights to have played a strategic role in destabilising the ideological roots of the Islamic political and ideological system. Women were identified as the group most vulnerable to oppression under an Islamic regime and central to the republican struggle against the Islamic forces in Turkish society (Tekeli 1981).

Thus, the emergent feminist movement of the 1930s was limited to issues in the public sphere that coincided with the secular state-building project. Women were perceived to have benefited from the reforms introduced by Atatürk in several ways: Western clothing for women was encouraged whilst the veiling of women was discouraged, and a new civil marriage was introduced banning polygamy. Recalling the modernising zeal of the early Republic, women were expected to embrace the new freedoms and civilised ways of being, as defined by the Republican elite. The ideal of a modern Turkish woman could therefore be summed up as married, unveiled and in public service. However, the reforms were purely focused on the public sphere, leaving patriarchal family structures of the private realm untouched (Tekeli 1997; Ayata and Tütüncü 2008), and leaving women "emancipated but unliberated" (Kandiyoti 1987). Only the public element of women's rights was seen as relevant, and the embryonic feminist movement became overlapped with the secular state ideology. Gaining full voting rights as early as 1934 may in fact have been counterproductive, as this led to claims that gender equality had already been achieved. Feminism was

underlined by a strict separation of state and religion as well as an aspiration for a modern republic in the image of the West. This form of “state feminism” (White 2003) meant that the dominant voice within the movement was focused on the public, secular role of women, leaving all other issues facing women in the private sphere outside its immediate agenda.

To offer an example from within the women’s movement, Esim and Cindoğlu describe the movement at the end of the 1990s as having diversified into three main strands: Kemalist, Islamist and Feminist (1999). The Kemalist organisations are identified as the largest group by this study. There is a strong alignment with state feminism, whereby women participate in the public sphere in support of the principles of Kemalism. The work of these groups is focused on the central level, on working with the state. Although conducting some work in the poor neighbourhoods of the largest cities on educating women on the nationalist and secular ideas, these groups on the whole have very limited grassroots reach. The Islamist women’s groups, on the other hand aim much more towards the delivery of services in their activities. These often combine religious education with welfare programmes. The work of the groups has generally focused on regions where an Islamic party controls the municipal government. The services provided are managed through a well-organised grassroots apparatus and the programmes sustained are wide-reaching. The services cater mainly for the religious communities, and provide support for women within the traditional and conservative context of being a wife and a mother within a family structure. Finally, the smallest group of women’s organisations are the Feminist organisations. These take gender as the core organising principle, making women’s needs and rights as the ultimate priority of their work. The central services these organisations provide are shelters for victims of domestic violence and child care centres. It is not difficult to perceive the women’s movement – with the Kemalist/Islamist fault line cutting through its centre – as a microcosm representing the divergent interests that have been reconfiguring the fabric of Turkish society since the 1980s.

Since the late 1990s, when Esim and Cindoğlu conducted their study, the fault line between Kemalist and Islamic groups within the women’s movement has become more defined. Particularly since the electoral victory of the Islamic-leaning AKP party in 2002, the success of moderate political Islam has changed the terms of the debate. In the slipstream of the rise of political Islam, the Islamic women’s groups have also moved closer to the centre ground, merging feminist and Islamic ideas in their rhetoric.

The demands to wear the headscarf in public institutions, such as universities, is now framed as an issue of human rights, where liberal intellectuals as well as Islamic groups argue that all should have the same right to higher education regardless of their religious belief (Yavuz 2003). Such attempts by Islamic groups to claim the middle ground in the political debate between religion and secularism have in part led to the increased tension that we witness today (such as the demonstrations in 2007 mentioned above).

Some observers of Turkish civil society lament the fragmented and heterogeneous nature of civil society, describing the lack of homogeneity as its “Achilles heel” (Diez et al. 2005; Kubicek 2005). When compared with the ideal of civil society development, as seen through Western eyes, Turkish civil society does indeed seem both fragmented and heterogeneous; the entire narrative of the post-1980s politics in Turkey tends to crystallise around the issue of particular identities, and the Kemalist/Islamist fault line illustrated through the women’s movement is only one salient example of this. Homogeneity and unity of civil society did exist in the past, but at the expense of minority interests. Civil society used to speak with a unitary voice thanks to a hegemonic state that had created a civil society in its own image. Under these circumstances, the lack of unity within civil society can be regarded as a welcome development in the right direction. Fragmentation and competition between the different voices in civil society is inevitable.

The development of civil society in Turkey echoes many of the ideas expressed by Ferguson, Hegel, de Tocqueville and Gramsci. Civil society in Turkey has evolved in parallel to commercialisation and capitalist development, where the economic liberalisation efforts of the 1980s in particular were reflected in the growth of pluralist civil society. Perhaps the most pertinent observations come from Hegel and Gramsci, as Hegel described the inherent competition present in civil society and Gramsci pointed to the hegemonic versus counter-hegemonic struggles that take place in civil society. These characteristics are indeed descriptive of how civil society has played out in practice. It is therefore less certain whether the donors’ perception of civil society in Tocquevillean terms as a democratic counterweight to the state remains accurate in the case of Turkey.

*Political culture and civil society*

Civil society may be eager further to develop its voice and to become a greater player in society, and forces within the EU may be keen to see civil society take a greater role; but what are the limitations to civil societal development within Turkey? This section will attempt to chart aspects of the political and social boundaries for civil societal development, for the political culture in Turkey remains antagonistic to civil societal development. Through specific examples, this section highlights the important role played by a strong state tradition in Turkish politics, and illustrates the kinds of issues that the EU civil society policy intends to address. Party structures and their policies remain hierarchical and top-down, failing to support a stronger civil society (Rubin 2002). The political debate in Turkey tends to gravitate heavily towards issues of high politics, such as the overall nature of democracy and secularism, and the role of religion in politics, devaluing the more mundane problems of effective practical policymaking (Heper 2002). The prominence of ideological debates in politics has led to most issues being interpreted in essentialist, either/or terms. Party leaders, in the heavily hierarchical party system, become representatives of these differing worldviews and the party becomes their personal fiefdom. The arrangement lacks intra-party democracy, and the space for constructive debate, leaving many socio-economic groups outside all public decision-making processes (Heper 2002 p. 145). Civil society is notably affected by the political culture that emerges from this system.

The events surrounding the 1999 Marmara earthquake serve to illustrate these points. The earthquake impacted one of the most industrial regions of Turkey located just outside of Istanbul, claiming between 17,000 and 20,000 lives. In the aftermath of the earthquake, civil society initially mobilised in an unprecedented way, yet the organisations involved were reluctant to sustain such a high-profile role. Although this was a natural disaster, the losses could have been significantly reduced with proper precautions (World Bank 2001). To compound the public frustrations, the state institutions – including the military – were exposed as being utterly unprepared for the emergency, taking days rather than hours to respond to the crisis (Jalali 2002). Civil society groups were hailed as the heroes of the quake, able to respond immediately and provide critical assistance to the victims, particularly during the first 48 hours. During the subsequent relief effort, some 40 CSOs coordinated their activities through the formation of a Civil Society Earthquake Coordination Committee, constructing and managing a city of 2000 tents (Kubicek 2002; Jalali 2002). The contrast between the



nature of the responses and the subsequent public support for civil society-based relief initiatives carved an unprecedented opportunity for CSOs to stake their claim as an important societal voice. However, even more striking was the reluctance of CSOs to make any use of this opportunity. Despite the political capital gained by civil society activism, the organisations were unable to channel this into gains in the political arena. The network of organisations was simply too loose to transform to an effective movement. Civil society remained “less a ‘society’ than simply thousands of volunteers” (Kubicek 2001 p. 40). Gradually the state took over the humanitarian operations related to the earthquake and regained control of the agenda. CSOs managing the tent cities were asked to leave, the reluctant ones being persuaded with threats to turn off water and electricity supplies (Jalali 2002). From a civil society perspective, the events surrounding the aftermath of the earthquake suggest that civil society is still lacking the political edge that would enable it to become more than an array of activists and organisations each with their own particular agenda. Additionally, it would seem that civil society is vulnerable to the effects of political point-scoring.

In the summer of 2004, a fast train travelling between Istanbul and Ankara crashed, causing 39 deaths. The crash was caused by poor infrastructure that failed to meet the requirements of the new fast trains, something that industry experts had alluded to previously. In contrast, the Minister of Transport Binali Yıldırım was interviewed only hours before the crash, describing the train as perfectly safe (Turkish Daily News 2004). Mr Yıldırım’s credentials for the post were heavily questioned, for his qualifications did not extend any further than having worked in the Istanbul municipal government during Mr Erdoğan’s time as the mayor of Istanbul. When a reporter then inquired from the Prime Minister Erdoğan whether the Minister of Transport would be asked to resign, his response was: “know your place” (Ganioglu 2004). In response to the government’s refusal to admit responsibility, the Transportation Worker’s Union (*Birleşik Taşımacılık Çalışanları Sendikası – BTÇS*), and the Turkish Chamber of Civil Engineers (*İnşaat Mühendisleri Odası – IMO*), acted together to indict the transport minister on the grounds of moral responsibility. The proactive stance adopted by the two CSOs was soon subsumed by political manoeuvring. The opposition party in government, CHP, filed a petition for an emergency parliamentary session during summer recess in order to discuss the dismissal of Mr Yıldırım. With its comfortable parliamentary majority the AKP won

the vote and avoided further embarrassment on the issue. Nevertheless, the incident offers a useful example of the growing capacity of civil society to scrutinise government actions and to demand accountability.

The final illustration of state-civil society relations comes from a controversial proposal for law reform that played out in 2007. Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code has for years been at the epicentre of the freedom of speech debates in Turkey. Prior to the changes, the article stated that it was a criminal act to insult Turkishness. Given the lack of clarity as to what Turkishness meant in this context, a wide array of cases have been made against journalists and critics of the Turkish government under the auspices of Article 301. The government was facing increasing pressure from the EU to amend or completely scrap Article 301 (Zaman 2007). At the same time, for many others this Article forms an essential part of Turkey's identity, and should at best be amended so that it cannot be used as a pretext for unjustifiably imprisoning thorny individuals. This case also exemplifies a situation where external pressures to Europeanise collide with domestic suspicions fuelled by the Sèvres Syndrome that see the EU agenda as wanting to weaken Turkey's position under the guise of democratising its institutions. The government needs to display a commitment to the Copenhagen Criteria and democratic reform whilst proving to the nationalist sceptics that it is not about to dismantle Turkey's national integrity. Placed between a rock and a hard place, the AKP government opted for a novel solution. It consulted a group of civil society organisations for an opinion on the issue. At the end of 2006, 18 professional chambers, trade unions and other CSOs got together to discuss possible changes to Article 301 (Aktar 2007). Three of the organisations invited to take part withdrew at once, as they saw no need to make any changes to the article and another two organisations demanded that the article be scrapped altogether. The 13 remaining organisations recommended alterations to the article.<sup>32</sup> Following several months of negotiation, the recommendations led to minor alterations in the legal text. The proposal suggested that the word "Turkishness" be clarified as "having a citizenship tie to the Republic of Turkey" and the maximum prison sentence was reduced from three to two years (Turkish Daily News 2007).

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<sup>32</sup> The organisations involved included the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodities Exchanges (TOBB), the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TÜSİAD), the Economic Development Foundation (İKV), the Turkish Union of Agricultural Chambers (TZOB), TÜRK-İŞ, Turkish Confederation of Employers' Unions (TİSK), the Confederation of Public Servants' Union (MEMUR-SEN), and the Television Broadcasters' Association (TVYD).

Bringing civil society into the 301 debate was a shrewd political move by the AKP government, utilising civil society to its own ends. Its actions responded to EU demands on two fronts: taking action on Article 301 and allowing for greater civil society involvement in political decision-making processes. In addition, the government was also able to keep a clean scorecard vis-à-vis their nationalist critics – if the recommendations went too far and the situation became too volatile the government could still retract on amending the Article, shift blame on civil society and emerge with no significant loss of political capital. Such pragmatism was also reflected in the selection of civil society representatives for the committee; business chambers and trade unions dominated the list. Their credentials as civil society representatives extended, at best, to representing the interests of workers and businesspeople in the formal economy. It may have been more appropriate to invite representatives of those individuals who have been directly affected by the law – such as journalists’ associations and human rights associations. Such action would even have resonated strongly with the third sector logic prevalent in Europe, and one of the aspirational goals of Turkey’s Europeanisation. It is true that business chambers and trade unions serve different interests from the government and cannot therefore be guaranteed to deliver a decision that is favourable to the government’s position. However, the consultative forum, in terms of its membership and mandate, seems to have been constructed in such a way that made it more likely than not for civil society to become the means for government to develop policy, as opposed to civil society influencing government policy.

Hegel regarded the state as the best possible representative of universal interests and thus remained the ultimate arbiter of civil societal disputes. The above examples show that the situation in Turkey is slightly different. The state is in fact intricately involved in shaping and managing civil society, creating a Gramscian representation of state-civil society relations that establishes hegemony. It is this kind of state tradition that the current EU civil society policy, with emphasis on dialogue, is trying to change.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The first part of the chapter referred to the Turkish paradox, namely the simultaneous pursuit of civilizational and cultural goals that were at odds with each other. To make this synthesis work, politics were conducted in a top-down manner that firmly

sidelined diverging points of view. Kemalism framed its project in essentialist either/or terms. The synthesis was never able to weld society together, however, yielding a compartmentalised society. The differences, particularly across the secular-Islamic divide, remain a defining feature of an individual's identity. This tradition continues to cast its shadow upon the way in which voices within civil society present themselves in the public sphere. Even though the number of voices has grown exponentially, the debate in civil society has retained an either/or mentality. Established structures and learnt behaviour will affect the interaction between EU policies and the development of civil society.

The Sèvres syndrome – the suspicion of Western intentions based on the treatment Turkey experienced by the Allies after the First World War – continues as a common shorthand, particularly in political punditry, for understanding elements of Turkish foreign policy. It also remains a point to consider in the current phase of EU-motivated domestic changes. To what extent is the EU agenda guiding these developments? Or is the success of political and policy Europeanisation in Turkey largely dependent on the way in which the EU project is able to navigate the domestic political dynamics? The former Europe enthusiast – the secular elite – has begun to doubt the propriety of the EU accession project because it has been a key part of the strategy of the Islamic AKP government claiming the political centre stage. The more nationalist actors have recently begun re-branding pro-Europeans as agents of the West trying to harm Turkey's national integrity. It would seem that EU policies are potentially compromised by the domestic political environment, where the meaning of Europeanisation began to shift since the AKP came to power in 2002. This chapter has offered an account of likely ways in which the domestic political context of Turkey may mediate the impact of Europeanisation processes, and indeed, mediate the impact of EU funding to NGOs.

The three chapters that follow will in turn offer a more detailed account of NGO behaviour in Turkey. Whilst the thesis points to a correlation between historical and political context of Turkish civil society and the behaviour NGOs exhibit in the face of EU funding, this is not meant to argue for the uniqueness of the Turkish case vis-à-vis other country cases where the EU has offered similar support under similar circumstances. In each instance, EU funding is motivated by an external agenda that aims to bring about change, and NGOs attempt to appropriate this agenda in order to make it more beneficial to them. Rather, this correlation aims to underline the

importance of each individual set of historical, political and social circumstances as part of the explanation for NGO behaviour. In each country context, similar behaviour is rationalised through different kinds of ideas and discourses that stem from the local context. These are the confines within which this thesis puts forward its findings with regard to NGO behaviour in Turkey.

The challenge remains one of ensuring that the Europeanisation processes continue. This challenge is particularly acute as regards democratisation, as these processes should bring the different groups in Turkish civil society closer together. From a civil society point of view, the democratic developments in Turkey since 1980 have been full of both opportunities and shortcomings. An autonomous and colourful civil society has emerged, but the new forms of organisation are still caught up in the either/or styled thinking of the past. The heterogeneous and fragmented nature of Turkish civil society, as well as its weaknesses as a counterpoint to the state are well documented. The historical context offers a way to make sense of the opportunities and shortcomings that are found in the current phase of civil society development. Can the EU accession process work toward narrowing the gulf that exists between the secular and Islamic camps in Turkish society?

Recalling momentarily the argument of Chapter Three, which suggested that EU policy on civil society is primarily guided by the requirements of the accession process, where human rights and civil society dialogue are presented as a neutral agenda for civil society support. Funding is in theory available to NGOs of all shapes and sizes that underwrite the EU agenda for civil society development. By adhering to such broad ultimate goals, the EU can introduce a sense of impartiality and fairness to the policy intervention. However, funding is only available to organisations that are able to navigate the complex project application procedures. In practice this means that the option of funding is readily available only to a section of NGOs: a professional and secular NGO with moderate views is clearly the ideal type to fit EU's liberal democratic agenda. The EU's expectations to fuel democratisation and a vibrant civil society through its funding initiatives are problematic, for the impact of the EU is not limited to those NGOs that are being funded. As the following three chapters will illustrate, even where NGOs are not directly benefiting from funding they are affected by EU's civil society policy. With the limitations in the direct reach of EU funding on the one hand, and the unanticipated spill-over effect of EU policy among NGOs not

directly affected by EU funding on the other hand, the outcomes of EU civil society policy remain uncertain.

## 5 Governance of NGO Relationships

This chapter aims to shed light on the nature of the relationships that Turkish advocacy NGOs engage in, both with state actors and with other advocacy NGOs. The activities of such organisations tend to focus on affecting government policy, making it important to analyse the relations that exist between state actors and NGOs. The alleged capacity of NGOs to participate at the various stages of the policymaking process contributes to the view that NGOs can improve effectiveness of these processes. Additionally, the strength in numbers element of NGO advocacy is regarded as the enabling factor behind NGO ability to influence governmental decision-making processes (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Thus the relationships NGOs build with each other are also at the heart of advocacy work. This collaborative element of advocacy activity remains an important reason for why a link tends to be drawn between liberal democratic practices and civil society activity – why vibrant civil society is seen as a precursor to democratisation, and why donors are so enthusiastic about civil society funding. These links between issues of effectiveness and processes of democratisation resonate with EU policy documents for civil society engagement (discussed in Chapter Three). The analysis of NGO relationships will therefore feed back to the assumptions about the role of civil society in EU policy, with a view to reflecting on the suitability of these in the Turkish context.

This chapter is organised in three sections. In the first section the discussion focuses on the concept of advocacy, outlining what the term means in the NGO context, and what kinds of roles can we see NGOs undertaking. This section will also underline the linkages between the advocacy NGOs and a liberal democratic understanding of state-civil society relations, and how this resonates strongly with the democracy-building agenda of EU civil society funding. The second section explores the relationships NGOs build with governmental actors in Turkey. Whilst there has been significant progress towards cooperation in recent years thanks to improved legislation, NGO-state relations in Turkey tend to serve the purpose of legitimising state actions. Furthermore, the fact that these relationships have not been institutionalised – there are no formal structures for such collaborative arrangements – questions the long-term viability of these relations.

Finally, the nature of the relationships between NGOs is explored, with particular emphasis on the relationships between women's NGOs. Although there are examples of collaborative projects that have led to successful outcomes, these remain anomalous. At the level of daily activities the collaborative spirit is much less evident. One explanatory factor in the realm of women's NGOs is the struggle for hegemony between the various secular and Islamic forces in Turkish society, a struggle that is being in part acted out in civil society.

Whilst developments have taken place which indicate that a vibrant, liberal-spirited civil society may be emerging, we should be wary of drawing conclusions too quickly. Visible signs of the positive developments include the legal changes to unshackle civil society actors and the examples of successful advocacy coalitions. In this regard EU policy, with its emphasis on the liberal components of civil society, may be justified. However, there is persuasive evidence to suggest that this is not a trend that manifests itself in the everyday relations between NGOs and governmental actors, nor in the relations between NGOs.

### **5.1 Advocacy and NGOs**

Advocacy in the very broadest sense is about achieving change. The word is derived from the Latin *ad vocare*, meaning "to speak to", arguing for a particular position. It refers, in particular, to groups that argue for a particular position, or seek to influence government policy (Clark 2010). NGOs in particular, have been associated with the concept. The actions surrounding this aspiration can take place in two different directions: making a connection with the public (the population at large) or through efforts that attempt to directly engage decision-makers (national government, municipal government or corporations, for example). The change is achieved through persuasion, either by informing others about an issue, or by making explicit demands for change (Lewis 2001). Generally, the strategy of informing is employed on both the public and the decision-makers whilst the strategy of making demands is more often exercised on the decision-makers.

The role of NGOs as advocates of change is also closely linked with Turkey's Europeanisation efforts. In this regard NGOs can take part in both policy Europeanisation and political Europeanisation. NGOs can facilitate the changes that are required to assist the government in achieving required reforms, or NGOs can use the knowledge that reforms are required as the means to challenge the government to



deliver on the expected changes. In addition, and as is illustrated by the two chapters that follow this one, NGOs are an integral part of the societal Europeanisation processes, of internalising the reforms and making them meaningful in the Turkish context.

Conceptual understandings of advocacy tend to focus on the aspect that deals with policy and governmental decision-making. David Korten points out that advocacy NGOs represent an organisational evolution from addressing the symptoms of social ills to a concern in remedying their root causes (Korten 1987). In so doing he separates advocacy from the other central NGO activity: service delivery. Similarly, David Lewis opines that advocacy leans towards the “articulation of a set of policies, but not necessarily the enactment of such policies” (Lewis 2001 p. 124). Perhaps because of the policy orientation, the focus for many analysts of advocacy is the relationship between NGOs and government. Thus, Adil Najam observes that advocacy NGOs “prod the government to do the right thing” (Najam 1999, quoted in Lewis 2001: 123), while Jenkins has argued that advocacy compares to “any attempt to influence the decisions of any institutional elite on behalf of collective interest” (Jenkins 1987 p. 267). The equation is not quite so simple, however. How is the “right thing” that Najam refers to determined? Is there only one such right, and if multiple rights exist, how can NGOs reconcile between them? To answer these questions it is also important to extend the investigation to include the nature of the relationships between NGOs themselves.

There may be a certain logic in focusing on the role of NGOs in affecting government policy when discussing advocacy, and it certainly remains relevant to exploring the processes of Europeanisation. Advocacy work with the public at large is often carried out with a view to gaining sufficient leverage to change government policy. Additionally there is the more obvious option of working directly with governmental actors towards change. In pursuing such a logic there is a danger of overemphasising the importance of upward advocacy – policy reform or legal reform – at the expense of downward advocacy that ensures that changes are in fact internalised or understood by the public. The EU, in its funding of NGOs, tends to favour activities that relate to upward advocacy more than those that lead to downward advocacy.

*Roles for advocacy NGOs when engaging with the state*

How should we conceptualise the different roles available to NGOs? On the one hand these can be categorised on the basis of the nature of the resistance against the state that is manifested by NGO action. On the other, the roles can be seen through a more pragmatic lens which focuses on the different ways in which NGOs can influence government policy. Both considerations are relevant to the case of Turkey, as the former concept allows us to analyse the influence of ideology and power politics on the behaviour of NGOs, whilst the latter concept pushes for an appreciation of the role NGOs have in the policymaking processes. A preference for either of these methods of advocacy, it will be argued, will have an impact on the types of relationships that NGOs wish to construct.

The “nature of the resistance” argument for explaining roles of advocacy NGOs is elucidated by the work of James Tully. In discussing the nature of governance, he argues that any exercise of power by the state opens up a field of potential responses by societal forces. These responses outline different ways NGOs can bring about change in the state. Tully calls these the “practices of freedom” and groups them into three categories. First, the governed can cooperate with the state, and thus help to sustain the current forms of conduct. Even such uncritical behaviour, he argues, can induce significant changes. Second, it is possible to problematise and challenge existing state policies. This can happen through a formal framework such as the legal system or through the accepted avenues of protest, demonstrations for example. In the third instance the state is not open to any negotiations on the issues a group is concerned about. In such a scenario these groups may categorically refuse the state exercise of power and engage in a direct, even violent, action against the state (Tully 2002). Thus in the NGO-state context, this tripartite model yields three potential roles for advocacy NGOs in trying to bring about change: *supporting*, *challenging* or *confronting* the state. As far as civil society’s Europeanisation role goes, it falls within the first two categories.

Another angle for understanding the role of advocacy NGOs vis-à-vis the state is through NGO influence on policymaking. Najam (1999) sees NGOs as policy entrepreneurs able to engage on three different levels of policymaking. First, they can aim to influence the setting of the agenda, to have a say in what issues will be taken up in policy discussions. At the second stage, NGOs can influence the development of policies by having an impact on the choices governments have to make between

various possible policy approaches. Finally, once a policy approach has been selected, NGOs can influence the actual methods that are implemented in realisation of that policy. Najam's policy entrepreneur model assumes that a broad consensus already exists between the NGO and the policymakers over the direction of a given policy. The role given for NGOs is to nudge, or prod the policy onto an alternative course, but never to derail it completely. Any such policy-related work, therefore, falls largely into the first category of Tully's model. All such advocacy takes place in broad support for government policy.

The vision of NGOs as advocates feeds into two salient assumptions about what the societal role of NGOs ought to be, both of which resonate with the liberal democratic – or donor – perspectives. First comes the assumption that NGOs challenge the autonomy of the state and in doing so check state power (Mercer 2002). Such understanding is largely informed by NGO experiences in Eastern Europe and Latin America, and supports the neo-liberal view of state-NGO relations. Civil society and state are placed in an antagonistic relationship, or a zero-sum game for autonomy and legitimacy (Trägårdh 2007). Taking its cue from writers such as Robert Putnam, an autonomous civil society that is understood to be autonomous of the state is seen as a prerequisite of democracy and in this view NGOs are central to processes of democratisation. The second assumption is that advocacy NGOs are all inherently good. The focus tends to have been on the countervailing force NGOs collectively present to the state, without problematising the nature of civil society itself (Howell and Pearce 2001b). By being part of civil society, NGOs are all part of the democratic process and together form a bulwark against the state. In this way there is a degree of assumed homogeneity across NGOs, in that they are all meant to share this democratising characteristic (Chandhoke 2007). Instead a more nuanced understanding of the political role of NGOs that is less dependent on such generic assumptions is required.

This chapter problematises these assumptions. To what extent can NGOs truly challenge the state through their advocacy? Most advocacy work takes place within the narrow constraints of established policy trajectories, where the negotiation is over nuances in the policy. When NGO advocacy is focused on policy efficacy, any outcome is also very likely to help legitimise state policy. This poses a pragmatic obstacle to the depth of the democratising impact NGOs can have. Second, NGOs are not necessarily any more democratic in nature than the state they constitute a part of.

How NGOs position themselves vis-à-vis the government or the state is contingent on the ideological and political positioning of a given NGO. Their advocacy activities are informed by this ideological agreement or disagreement. The chapter thus calls for a more nuanced and complex understanding of the nature of the relationships NGOs forge around them, and the impact these relationships have on the democratic – or Europeanising value that donor policy perceives Turkish NGOs to hold.

## **5.2 NGO-state relations**

In the current state of NGO-state relations one can observe both positive developments towards greater collaboration between government agencies and NGOs, as well as a lack of enthusiasm for greater NGO independence and involvement in the policy processes. The current relationship is thus suspended in a transition phase between a history of mutual suspicion following the crackdown on civil society activism in the early 1980s and the dramatically improved institutional and legal framework that emerged in the run-up to the start of the EU pre-accession talks. This section discusses three aspects of the relationships that NGOs have fostered with governmental actors. The first of these elaborates on the connections that exist at the level of central government; the second explores the links with municipal government; and the third looks more closely at an EU-funded project on improving relations between NGOs and the public sector in order to illustrate the development of NGO-government relationships in practice.

### *Central government and NGOs*

There have been a number of significant changes at the level of central government that at least in theory make it possible for NGOs to lobby the government more effectively. For one, there have been a number of legal reforms which benefit NGOs. In October 2004, the Associations Law was amended, lifting several restrictions that had previously curtailed civil society activism. More recently, the Foundations Law was substantially amended in February 2008. The key changes brought about by the new laws are outlined in the boxes below:

**THE NEW LAW ON ASSOCIATIONS (October 2004)**

- Lifting the requirement:
  - to seek permission when opening branches abroad, joining foreign bodies and holding meetings with foreigners;
  - to inform local officials of general assembly meetings taking place;
  - to seek permission to receive funds from abroad
- Requiring:
  - governors to issue a warning prior to taking legal action against CSOs;
  - security forces to obtain a court order before being allowed on the premises of a CSO
- Enabling CSOs to:
  - establish temporary platforms or networks;
  - conduct joint projects;
  - receive financial support from other associations and public institutions
- Setting up a Department of Associations within the Ministry of Interior, thus removing security forces as the first point of contact and oversight for civil society

**Table 2:** Summary of the new Law on Associations (European Commission 2004a; TUSEV 2004)**THE NEW LAW ON FOUNDATIONS (February 2008)**

- Tax exemptions:
  - All foundations with or without Public Benefit status will be exempt from gift and inheritance tax; all persons making grants or expenses to foundations will be exempt from income and corporate tax
- Board membership:
  - Removing a board member will only be possible against evidence of criminal acts
- Role of foreigners:
  - Foreigners are now able to establish foundations, and to serve as board members of existing foundations
- Foreign funding:
  - Receipt of foreign funding no longer requires a permission; a prior notification of authorities by the foundation will suffice

**Table 3:** Summary of the new Law on Foundations (TUSEV 2008)

The impact of these legal changes has been significant. The notion of freedom of association is no longer an oxymoron: CSOs are able to freely cooperate with other organisations, both local and foreign; they can receive funds from both local and foreign organisations without requiring government permission to do so. The two campaigns by women's groups, for example, to lobby for specific changes to the Civil and Penal Codes benefited from this changing attitude towards civil societal activity (see section 5.3 of this chapter). The consequences of the relaxed legal framework reach beyond the technical changes to the law. It amounts to an expression of trust in

these organisations – they do not need to be subject to surveillance, their operations are not clandestine or suspicious. During field research for this thesis, the NGO respondents offered these same two broad positive messages when asked about the positive impact of the reformed Associations Law. Non-governmental is no longer understood as anti-governmental. It was felt that this expression of trust together with the increased financial and organisational freedom legitimised the work the NGOs engage in.

The commissions that were set up as part of the law reform process have also opened their doors to NGOs. The law reform process requires the relevant department of the judiciary to create a commission to review the proposed reform.<sup>33</sup> These commissions are composed of judges, academics, representatives of NGOs and other experts on the given area of legislation. In order for an NGO to participate, first it is required to submit a written report on the subject of the reform. This is taken as an indication of their expertise on the subject, which is then reviewed by the judiciary. Since not many NGOs are able to write such reports, this in itself filters the number of organisations able to take on a committee membership down to the most capable and well resourced. However, the submission of such a report is no guarantee of participation in the commission:

Committees within government are not institutionalised. The chair of the committee selects members for the committee. At the end, it is the famous within the commission that will speak, and their opinion the media will ask afterwards. NGOs are on the sidelines, even when included. Or most famous groups steal the show.<sup>34</sup>

Representation is by invitation only, and given the limited size of these commissions, the larger and the better known NGOs tend to gain the positions within these commissions by virtue of being known to the selection committee. This also means that only a very small number of NGOs can participate in any given commission. Several NGO respondents were somewhat disillusioned by the process. Writing such reports was time consuming work with no guarantees of a fruitful outcome. Without an invitation to participate it was difficult to know if the recommendations of the report were in any way considered by the committee. Furthermore, what kind of report will

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<sup>33</sup> This section is based on an interview with Dr Irfan Neziroğlu, Deputy of the Directorate of Acts and Resolutions, Turkish Parliament, Ankara, 27 June 2008.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

gain an NGO the required access to the negotiating table? How critical can an NGO be of the proposed legal reform and still be successful in participating? These commissions provide NGOs with access to the negotiating table and with the chance to express their argument in favour of a certain policy direction. At the same time the top-down and hierarchical nature of the selection process for participating in committees means that this avenue is only available for a select few NGOs.

The establishment of the Department of Associations (DoA) further exemplifies the extent of the changes that have taken place in recent years. Prior to the DoA, CSOs dealt with the local police as the first point of contact on all bureaucratic matters. As respondents with personal experience recounted, it was the local police station that issued permissions to carry out projects, to apply for funding, and to travel abroad. At issue is not only the fact that this role was given to the police, but also the fact that standard organisational processes required official permits. The amended Associations Law, by establishing a DoA, addressed this rather uncivilian way of treating civil society and illustrates the notable extent to which the governance of NGOs has changed.

The DoA retains an aloof approach to facilitating NGO-government relationships.<sup>35</sup> Their point of view iterates that the reformed legal framework provides sufficient guidelines for NGOs to both lobby government and to partake in policymaking. The strategy put forward by the Department of Associations places the onus for greater collaboration largely on the shoulders of NGOs. Whilst government ministries are encouraged to sponsor NGO projects, there is an underlying belief that NGOs should first prove themselves to be developed enough to make good project partners. Article 10 of the new Associations Law allows ministries to co-sponsor up to 50 per cent of any NGO project. This arrangement may complement EU project funding, which expects beneficiary NGOs to find at least 10 per cent of the funds from other sources. Where such complementarity exists between, for example, the aims of the Ministry of Education and an EU project on encouraging rural families to send girls to school carried out by a youth NGO, the facility now exists to utilise such synergies. The DoA has been trying to encourage this kind of greater cooperation between NGOs and government ministries, and to this end the DoA issued a circular to

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<sup>35</sup> The point of view put forth in this paragraph reflects the official government position, as expressed in an interview with Dr Şentürk Uzun, the Head of the Department of Associations. Ankara, 08 August 2007.

all ministries to make sure that everyone is aware of the possibility for cooperation. The remaining challenge is to convince government officials that partnerships with NGOs are worth their while. Thus far, despite wider awareness of the existence of such possibilities, there has not been a great deal of enthusiasm for such activity within the ministries. The DoA hopes that by engaging with NGOs, the government can lead by example and show that these organisations are trustworthy partners, encouraging in turn the public to trust NGOs. They are not yet fully conversant with the new legislative infrastructure and are therefore not aware of all the avenues that will lead them to effective lobbying and be part of policymaking. NGOs are just beginning to emerge as a sector, and need therefore time to establish themselves within society. As Dr Uzun opined:

We are dealing with people that are just now forming NGOs. You must therefore be patient, more tolerant and continue to promote the [third] sector. It is important to promote trust between government and the [third] sector, and to build trust between NGOs and the public. The department [of Associations] is using the instruments it has to help, and it makes also sure the right of association is not being misused which would give the sector a bad name among public. The problem with government is that people there don't think it's worth dealing with NGOs. Here the department [of Associations] should lead by example and build confidence and trust.<sup>36</sup>

The above account reveals certain assumptions about NGOs and civil society in the Department of Associations. Basing ideas about civil society on something that is new and emerging in Turkey reveals a particular understanding of how NGOs are perceived. This understanding resonates well with words such as modern and professional, and less well with words like traditional and voluntary, in the end favouring those organisations that aspire to this particular model. Furthermore, preoccupation with projects where government agencies partner with NGOs communicates a particular understanding of what NGOs are – organisations that focus on delivering services. The way the potential relationships between NGOs and government institutions are structured leave little room for NGOs to influence government policy. They can only support it.

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Dr Şentürk Uzun, the Head of the Department of Associations, Ankara, 08 August 2007



Overall the framework for civil society participation at the governmental level is structured largely in a top-down fashion. The responsibility to develop the sector is seen to lie with the NGOs and other civil society actors. Whilst avenues exist for NGOs to participate (such as the commissions and the part-funded projects), there is little room for unsolicited input and in practice the access is likely to be limited to the most capable and professional NGOs. Much more work needs to be done to ensure that institutional mechanisms are put in place that make it clear how collaboration between government ministries and NGOs should be formulated.<sup>37</sup> For the moment, any such cooperation is contingent on the enthusiasm the officials employed by the ministry show towards NGO involvement. Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect a more flexible arrangement at the highest levels of government. If this is the case, then relations at the municipal level may provide greater insights.

#### *Structure of local government*

Local government in Turkey is made of three entities: the provincial administration, municipal administration and the village level (Köker 1995 p. 58; Polatoğlu 2000 p. 157). The appointment of each governor (*vagi*), the head of provincial administration, is approved by the president. Each province consists of roughly eight districts, and each district is governed by a district chief (*kaymakam*), also appointed by the president following a nomination made by the Ministry of Interior. Municipal administration is similarly found in each provincial and district capital, as well as in any community with more than 2000 inhabitants. Each municipality is headed by a mayor who has been elected by the local citizens for a five-year term. In villages with fewer than 2000 inhabitants an assembly of village adults elect a village headman (*muhtar*) to oversee local affairs. Overall, the system has been described as similar to the strong mayor model, where municipal councils work under the shadow or influence of the municipal mayor to a great extent (Köseçik and Sağbas 2004). In effect, the structures of local government do not really contribute to democratisation because local government remains subordinate to central government, functioning more on the basis of delegation rather than decentralisation (Köker 1995). Historically, at least, local government in Turkey has not been a great source of democratic citizen participation.

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with a senior EU civil servant, EU delegation to Turkey, Ankara, 03 April 2008. [B5]

The coexistence of two systems, based on one side on the appointments by central government, and on local elections on the other, complicates the political relationships at the local level. This is particularly true in instances where the governor's office and municipal government are represented by two different political parties. The local government actors – whether representing the governor's office or the municipal government – are not neutral and value-free in their actions. This is also likely to have an impact on how they choose to engage with the processes of policy implementation as they relate to NGO-local government relations in the context of EU-funded projects.

Local government reform has indeed been also in the agenda of EU support from Turkey. In 2004 a Local Administration Reform Programme was launched, that aimed to strengthen the capacity for local administration reform at the level of central and local government, to improve financial and budgetary procedures, and to develop the efficiency and effectiveness of human resource management (Ministry of the Interior 2010). This reform programme is part of the modernisation efforts that are expected to precede any future EU membership, not least because of the importance the EU attaches to local authorities. The proximity of local government to the public gives it an important role in persuading the public of the benefits of integration (Köseçik and Sağbas 2004 p. 362).

#### *NGO-local government relations*

At the level of local government, the relations with NGOs are different because a more intimate relationship can be developed. The leadership of a municipal government is naturally a more accurate reflection of the local nuances and therefore more representative of, and attentive to local needs and demands. However, at the same time, local government can be an unpredictable and even mercurial partner for NGOs. These relationships can pan out in a variety of ways depending on the nature of the particular local government actors the NGO is dealing with. Political affiliations and personal relationships become increasingly salient factors. The section offers examples of this diversity of ways in which these relationships develop.

The relations depict a persuasive correlation between the political alignments between local government and NGOs, and the extent of their collaboration. For example, an Islamic women's NGO interviewed in Istanbul, has developed a positive, constructive relationship with its municipal government that dates back to 1994. The

municipality also happens to be governed by an Islamic party, and despite political upheaval at the national level during this time, the municipality has been consistently governed by the same party. The NGO has gradually forged a close relationship, and collaborated on a number of small scale projects. Several of the NGO volunteers are in fact workers from the municipal government. Similarly, an Islamic women's umbrella group has also been given rent-free office space by the same municipality.<sup>38</sup> These relationships were built on the basis of a worldview that shared a common base in religion. Religion in the public domain, as Chapter Four has illustrated, is virtually always a political issue. Through other interviews, I heard of other examples where political views shaped the relationship between municipal government and NGOs. A municipality in Istanbul governed by the Democratic People's Party (*Demokratik Halk Partisi* – DEHAP)<sup>39</sup> was unable to find a partner NGO for a project because all NGOs which were approached refused to work with the party for political reasons. In response, the municipality displayed its innovative capabilities and created its own NGO in order to qualify for the funding. In slightly different ways each of these cases illustrates the importance of congruence in political views between local government and NGOs, both as a bridge and an obstacle to collaboration.

Political alliances also played a role in determining government-NGO relationships elsewhere in the country. During the interviews I conducted in the southeast of Turkey, in Diyarbakir, every NGO I interviewed made the same distinction when asked about collaboration with government offices:

We collaborate with the municipality, they even invite us sometimes. But we cannot do the same thing with the governor's office, and the previous governor was more moderate than the current one. The governor's office has a tendency to classify NGOs as 'this' or 'that'. There is even a UN project called 'Local Agenda 21' that aims to include the local municipality and governor, but the governor here has always refused to take part.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Author interview with an Islamic women's activist, Istanbul, 14 April 2008. [C1]

<sup>39</sup> Representing Kurdish interests, Democratic People's Party (DEHAP) was a reincarnation of the People's Democracy Party (HADEP). HADEP was banned in 2003 on the grounds that it supported the terrorist activities of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). In 2005, the new DEHAP merged to form the Democratic Society Party (DTP). In December 2009 DTP was shut down on "charges of ethnic separatism" (Zaman 2009).

<sup>40</sup> Interview with a member of a Muslim human rights NGO, Diyarbakir, 01 July 2008. [B2]

The governor's office plays by the 'official' rules that it needs to follow. They have a different point of view to working with NGOs from the municipality.<sup>41</sup>

The reasons for these differences were the following. The governor is appointed by the national government, and acts in accordance with the official government line and can therefore be less attuned to local issues. The previous governor was more moderate in his views whilst the current one tends to see NGOs as an extension of the irredentist, Kurdish movement. The municipal government, on the other hand, is elected locally so office-holders are more likely to be concerned with local issues and therefore also work on collaborative events with local NGOs. In this way, different sectors of government are likely to develop different kinds of relations with NGOs. One women's NGO that I interviewed in Diyarbakir described itself rather openly as a part of the municipal government. The NGO was effectively set up by the municipality in order to respond to EU calls for proposals that required local government-NGO partnerships.<sup>42</sup> In some of the interviews, similar anecdotal examples were repeated; often funds from the EU require cooperation between NGOs and municipalities, and in some instances this has encouraged municipalities to set up their own NGOs. These examples attest to the inventive ways that local actors have to establish NGO-local government relationship in order to qualify for EU funding (this issue of agency is taken up as one of the central themes of Chapter Seven).

The lax boundaries between civil society and local government seen in the above example of the women's NGO that was set up by the municipality demonstrate the unorthodox way in which citizens may position themselves in relation to municipal government. Given the hostile response of the current governor towards both NGOs and the local municipal administration, it may not be as surprising that NGOs and the municipality view themselves as being on the same side, *vis-à-vis* the governor.

This is not to say that collaboration between NGOs and local government is not witness to any contestation. A women's NGO which runs two shelters for women suffering from domestic violence in Istanbul has collaborated with local government offices in an Istanbul municipality. Upon completion of the project, against the wishes of the NGO, the municipality insisted that the development should not be called a

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Diyarbakir 02 July 2008. [C16]

<sup>42</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Diyarbakir 02 July 2008. [C16]

“shelter”; it should instead be named “guesthouse” (*konukevi*). Using the word shelter would insinuate that there is a problem in the neighbourhood, and for this reason a guesthouse was deemed a more appropriate and neutral term to use.<sup>43</sup> Thus, there is a danger for the politics surrounding the projects to take over, changing the way the outcomes of a project will play out.

Similarly, in both Ankara and Istanbul the governor’s office has initiated court proceedings in an effort to close gay-rights NGOs. In Istanbul, the governor’s office in early 2007 filed a case against *Lambda*, the largest queer advocacy NGO in Turkey, on the grounds that its activities are “against the law and morality of Turkey”, and that the NGO’s objectives were offensive to Turkish moral values and family structures (Human Rights Watch 2008). The Ankara governor’s office has also previously attempted to close down two other queer organisations, KAOS-GL and Pink Life (*Pembe Hayat*) on similar charges, but in these cases the charges were dropped by the prosecution. In November 2008, following an appeal, the proceedings against *Lambda* have also been dropped. Nevertheless the episode shows how local government institutions may take an interest in controlling what kind of associationalism should be allowed.

Overall, the way in which local government is able to engage with NGOs is more relevant to NGOs. The relationships are more intimate, not least because they often centre on a practical project. The examples above point to the variety of views that are found across municipalities, both along political (e.g. Islamic vs. secular and Kurdish vs. Turkish) lines and along lines of sexuality. As the section has shown, the positions NGOs take largely determine the nature of any relationship with governmental actors.

#### *Facilitating NGO-local government relations through EU projects*

As a final example of NGO-local government relations I look at an EU-funded project that aimed to facilitate the development of such connections. As has already been mentioned, in the context of the pre-accession process EU has gradually shifted its attention away from NGOs and towards a variety of governmental agents. In connection with this shift, an EU-funded pilot project was conceived that would encourage improved NGO relations with public sector agents, and with municipal

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with a member of a women’s NGO, Istanbul, 06 April 2008. [C13]

governments in particular. The account presented here is looking at the project from the point of view of a children's NGO that took part in the pilot project.

The programme was set up for an initial time-frame of two years, with the EU Secretary General, the Central Finance and Contracts Unit (CFCU), the British Council and the EU Delegation to Turkey as the supporting partners. In total, 2 million Euros were committed to the programme aimed towards “fostering cooperation and dialogue” between NGOs and the public sector (European Commission 2007b). The project was perceived as the beginning of a long-term process of increasingly close cooperation between NGOs and municipal officials. In the words of an EU Delegation representative:

[The programme] was a result of the changes following the start of accession negotiations, where public institutions were coming more into the picture [...] there is a severe mistrust between the two parties for historical reasons – the two parties being civil society and the state – there is really a severe mistrust that stems from the experience of the 1980 coup and all that. There was very limited experience of working together between the parties. So we came up with this project, which basically wanted to look at the state of play, how the organisational structure of the two sides allows collaboration and dialogue cooperation, and what could be done in terms of improving dialogue and cooperation between the two sides.<sup>44</sup>

The programme had two central elements. First the programme arranged for a wide consultation process where representatives from both sides came together to produce a memorandum of understanding. This document aimed to lay out the basic principles of cooperation between civil society organisations and public institutions. Secondly, the programme cultivated 11 pilot projects where NGOs public bodies as partners on specific projects.

So how did this project play out in practice? Here is an account from the point of view of one of the 11 NGOs that described its experience of partaking in a pilot program.<sup>45</sup> In the experience of the director, the entire project was a “disaster”. She claimed that the programme director – who had previously been employed by the

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with a senior EU civil servant, EU Delegation to Turkey, Ankara, 03 April 2008. [B5]

<sup>45</sup> This account is based entirely on the interview with the director of the children's NGO and may not offer a full picture. When I raised the issue during subsequent interviews with representatives of the CFCU, who should have been responsible for the financial oversight of the project, nobody was able to recall that such a project had ever existed. The website for the project [www.skip.tr.org](http://www.skip.tr.org) has been decommissioned at least since January 2008, which is when I first tried to access it.

CFCU – behaved like a military commander, and managed the operation through a series of financial threats. The NGO director was said to have frequently arrived at the office to find emails making demands such as:

The money will not be transferred to you unless you do this; unless you agree to do things our way, you will have to pay a penalty. Nearly every week we received such emails.<sup>46</sup>

This style of management was demotivating for the group, the NGO director recalled. She felt that the programme director did not appreciate the NGOs' limited staff and therefore very limited capacity to comply with such demands, especially at short notice. Managing the relationship with this intermediary organisation ate up most of the productive time for the NGO. The NGO was eventually compelled to write a letter of complaint about the programme administration, copying the letter to all project partners: the EU delegation, British Council and the EU Secretary General. Overall, the NGO was given €38,000 under the program, but due to lack of compliance with the procedural demands for EU funding (the NGO was accused of spending the funds in what were deemed unaccountable ways), they were required to reimburse €25,000. Following long discussions with the CFCU and the EU delegation, the amount to be reimbursed was reduced to €300. The NGO director found the whole process so draining that she made a decision not to apply for any EU funding for at least two years.

Aside from the difficulties in managing relations with the intermediary organisation, the relationship with the municipal government proved also tricky and politicised. Throughout the project, the NGO had only one point of contact within the municipality. In other words, the project was not institutionalised within the municipal office. The project itself focused on working with children who had spent time at correctional institutions, with a view to facilitating their re-integration in society. This issue is central to the day-to-day work of the NGO, so the content of the project was not new to them: only the partnering organisation was new. The Republican People's Party (CHP) governed the municipality at the time, which is a party with a conservative policy orientation. As it happened, the project coincided with a vote in France (October 2006) on the issue of the Armenian genocide by the Ottoman armies

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with a director of a child-rights NGO, Ankara, 02 April 2008. [D7]

in 1915. The vote would make it illegal to claim it was not a genocide, much like the case of Holocaust. Given that on issues such as this the CHP has a staunchly nationalist political stance, and it refuses to recognise the events of 1915 as genocide, the party remained adamantly against any such legislation and was actively involved in arranging protest demonstrations outside the French embassy in Ankara. The Cankaya municipality, being governed by the CHP, also contributed to the protests. The person at the municipal government responsible for the NGO project on children's rehabilitation collected several of the project's participants, children aged 6 to 14, and transported them to the demonstration. Here the children were given anti-French slogans to carry and asked to participate in the demonstration. The project was thus hijacked by the political processes that the municipal government was engaged in, making use of the NGO and the child beneficiaries as pawns in the political manoeuvres being executed.

This project was unable to deliver on its aims. Following the 12 month pilot programme, it was discontinued. It was difficult to determine the reasons for this, as the informants interviewed were unforthcoming when asked this question. The example of one of the pilot projects described above may offer some insights, however. For the municipality to assign one member of staff to work on the project does not suggest that the project was seen as the beginning of a long-term partnership, nor did it reflect a change in how relations with NGOs were operationalised. If that member of staff had been more dynamic and interested in the project and the work the NGO was doing, the project may well have been much more successful. Having just one point of contact within the municipality did mean that the project lacked institutionalisation, but this, as long as the right people are involved, does not necessarily mean that the project will necessarily be a failure. What it does suggest, however, is that the transaction costs for participating in such projects tend to be too high for governmental actors to truly engage in them.<sup>47</sup> The costs in terms of time and political ability outweigh the benefits of genuine, full participation.

This may also tell us something about the limits of what can be achieved through project-based development. The project was conceptualised between the EU Delegation, the CFCU and the EU Secretary General, and €2 million were introduced

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<sup>47</sup> Adam Fagan (2010) "Civil Society Assistance or State-Building? Evaluating Donor Assistance in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia". Paper read at the "For Better or Worse? Civil Society and Transitions in the Western Balkans" workshop, London School of Economics, 07 May 2010.



to the equation. The only common denominator between the municipality and the NGO was the project and the funding. There may have been a valid reason why these two actors would not have worked together under normal circumstances – perhaps their political views were too different, a reason that was suggested earlier. Partnerships for the sake of partnership may not be that constructive.

### *Sub-conclusion*

Exposing the different layers of relations between NGOs and representatives of the state reveals a variety of relationships. Whilst the opportunities for engagement are much narrower at the level of central government, here the channels have been more institutionalised than at the level of municipal government. The use of commissions is one example of how these relations are institutionalised at the level of central government, as is the facility for government departments to offer their support to NGO projects. Under the reformed legal framework there is greater scope for NGOs to tap into these relationships and make good use of the possibilities that exist. It is fairly clear how civil society can gain access to policymaking and influence governmental decision-making. The issue of who is able to gain access is less clear and the system appears to facilitate access for elite NGOs – the larger professional groups. NGO relations with municipal government vary, largely because municipalities represent a spectrum of political positions in a way that central government does not. Whilst there are more possibilities for NGO-government relationships at the local level, these are not as well established as those at the central government level and have the potential to play out in a variety of ways. Beyond this NGOs can of course enhance their voice by gaining the support of the broader public, or indeed by working together with other NGOs.

### **5.3 NGO-NGO relations**

If relationships with governmental entities offer only limited opportunities for engagement, then good relations with other NGOs can offer greater scope for NGOs to influence government policy. This section explores this claim by looking at examples from within the women's movement in Turkey. Women's groups in Turkey make for an interesting case because whilst a broad array of women's NGOs have collaborated successfully in policy campaigns, there are deep seated sources of tension within the movement as well. The case presents both opportunities and shortcomings for

advocacy activities in Turkey and suggests that civil society is still going through growing pains. As a result, it does not necessarily contribute to democratisation in the way that EU policy anticipates. Given the essentialist tendencies of NGOs in Turkey, what remains unresolved is the question of how to allow all points of view to be given space, whilst also ensuring appropriate guidelines for tolerance and cooperation.

*Successful NGO relationships between women's NGOs*

During the last decade the women's movement in Turkey has had a significant impact on a reform process that has paved the road to greater gender equality. Although the realisation of these reforms was set as a precondition for the beginning of the EU accession process, the women's movement has nevertheless played a significant role in shaping the final mould of these reforms. The new Turkish Civil Code, adopted in 2001 integrated many of the amendments the women's NGOs had advocated for since the early 1980s. It abolished the position of a man as the (legally recognised) head of the family and provided women with new legal rights in marriage and divorce. Spurred on by the success of the campaign to reform the civil code, the women's movement regrouped behind another campaign to reform the Turkish Penal Code (Anıl et al. 2005). Following three years of campaigning, a new Penal Code was adopted in 2004, representing another major shift in gender equality. Sexual violence is now regarded as a crime against the individual, not against society; rape within marriage now constitutes a crime; and a rapist can no longer marry their victim as a means to avoid punishment. In all, over 30 recommendations made by the campaign were included in the final document (Anıl et al. 2005). In these two cases women's NGOs have been tremendously successful in influencing legal reform – or legal Europeanisation – in the context of the EU reform process.

Although the reform process has provided a focus around which women's activism could crystallise in recent years, it is important to consider the role played by women's NGOs in the context of the wider story of women's activism. As Chapter Four has already outlined in more detail, the current women's movement in Turkey dates back to the 1930s, to the early years of the republic, when women's liberation became a symbol for the kind of modernisation and progress the new leadership aspired to. As such, it was juxtaposed against the Islamic tradition that represented a traditional and backward role for women. For a long time it was the secular, modern women – the state feminists as they were described as in Chapter Four – who occupied

the civil societal space (Tekeli 1981). Particularly since 1980, following the military coup, a more diverse set of organisations has gradually come to inhabit women's civil society. The impact of this has been most visible in the growth of the Islamic women's movement since the late 1980s (Göle 1994), and the bipolarity of women's civil society, poised between the secularist and Islamic influences (Keyman 1995), has become increasingly clear.

It is therefore somewhat surprising that despite the increasing polarity within the women's movement, NGOs across the spectrum came together behind the campaigns on legal reform. How should we explain this success of the women's NGOs in influencing the legal reform process? When I put this question to the respondents, they pointed at three possible explanations.<sup>48</sup> First was the urgency of the issue. The parliamentary discussions regarding the Penal and Civil Codes took place over a limited time-frame, after which the window of opportunity to have an impact would pass. The awareness among women's groups that success would require a short, high impact campaign brought many of them together for the first time. The second factor was the universal nature of the issues that the women were demanding, which made it relatively easy for all to agree on the demands of the campaigns. In addition, these demands were not developed simply for the sake of this campaign; they had existed for a long time and had been internalised within the movement. Finally, the campaign operations were directed by a relatively small number of women. The campaign on the Penal Code, for example, was headed by members of 26 organisations (Anil et al. 2005). This meant there were fewer differences to reconcile between the most active participants, whilst others were happier to follow in their slipstream. Ideological and political differences between the participants – particularly those relating to the role of religion in public life – were cast aside for the purpose of achieving lasting structural change. These are the key reasons as to why the women's NGOs were able to foster such an effective network of relationships behind a single-issue campaign.

The two campaigns paint an ideal picture of an advocacy campaign. The women's NGOs are “prodding the government to do the right thing” as Jenkins' definition of advocacy suggests. By setting out a list of demands for legal reform, the

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<sup>48</sup> This opinion draws on the following interviews: interview with female activist, Ankara, 01 April 2008 [C14]; interview with a member of an women's NGO, Ankara, 08 August 2007[C4]; Interview with a women's rights activist, Istanbul, August 15 2007 [C2]; Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Ankara, 01 April 2008. [C15]

organisations publicly challenged the state to change its ways (Tully 2002). The campaigns were based on an antagonistic relationship with the government, making it attractive to draw comparisons with the Turkish case and the liberal democratic discourse depicting civil society as a bulwark against the state. We see an independent and well-organised movement that has been able to successfully challenge the hegemony of the Turkish state. Yet, the factors contributing to the success of the Penal and Civil Code campaign suggest that these campaigns were conducted under exceptional circumstances that may not reflect the true state of civil society in Turkey.

As these campaigns were elite-led by a small number of urban NGOs, it is important not to extrapolate overoptimistic conclusions about the state of Turkish civil society more broadly. Caution is particularly important where there are possible policy implications. The interview respondents, both civil society activists as well as EU and Turkish officials, often referred to the success of the women's movement as an example of the potential within Turkish civil society to develop. It would be tempting to conclude that women's activism offers an example of how to achieve further democratisation by building a vibrant civil society. The examples here have shown there exists a group of NGOs and activists that are extremely productive, vocal and relatively influential in their criticism and commentary on government policy. At the same time, it is important to be clear of the extent to which these campaigns were a unique example of a particular, non-replicable process. As one respondent described this situation:

There are many more opportunities to 'shake hands' for NGOs in Ankara and Istanbul. This is where the politicians are. This is where the embassies are. Also, there are people here that can help us make something with these chances, like our board members. This type of chances don't exist for organisations in Van [a city in the southeast of Turkey].<sup>49</sup>

Such policy influence as was evident in these campaigns can only be realised by the large, professional organisations working near the central government. Another respondent remarked that in the months that followed the approval of the penal code the "intellectual women of the movement took the message to other women, in order to

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Ankara, 01 April 2008. [C14]

inform them of their new rights and responsibilities”.<sup>50</sup> Although this is also an example of downward advocacy and is in itself a positive step, it should also remind us that the successes described were largely limited to the organisational elite among the women’s movement. The aim is not to devalue the successes, but to recognise the context in which they have been achieved, as this is important in understanding how the changing relationship between state and certain groups can (or cannot) be seen to have broader implications on state-civil society relations and democratisation. It is unlikely that a similar feat of influencing government policy could be replicated in, for example, a more rural setting in Turkey, with local government and local NGOs. Here the elite NGOs were able to make use of certain channels to influence government policy that made good use of a rare window of opportunity to have a say in legal reform.

The opportunities realised by the women’s movement can be regarded as an example of Sidney Tarrow’s “political opportunity structures”, which emerge when the political opportunities and constraints change. It is at such junctures, Tarrow argues, where civil society actors are able to create new, unique opportunities that arise from events around them (Tarrow 1998 pp. 19-20). The process of law reform that accompanies EU accession has been one such opportunity. It is important both to acknowledge the potential of the EU accession process to generate these opportunities, as well as to remember that the outcomes rely on delicate chains of causation that makes anticipation as well replication of such opportunities very difficult.

#### *Complicated NGO relationships between women’s NGOs*

Shifting the focus away from the two particular legal reform campaigns, this section focuses on the more complex and colourful array of relationships that underline relations between women’s NGOs. Outside the realm of the highly focused campaigns, women’s NGOs have not found it very easy to collaborate. This is due to a combination of reasons that gravitate around two issues: struggles for position and ownership within the women’s movements on one side, and divisions based on ideological differences on the other.

Struggles for position and ownership within the women’s movement get in the way of collaboration. In 2006 the Nordic embassies in Turkey extended their support to one women’s NGO by funding a campaign entitled “women’s agenda”. The

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with a member of a women’s NGO, Ankara, 03 April 2008. [C5]

campaign was headed by a well-known women's NGO based in Ankara. Other NGOs and women activists, however, took offence at this project. They questioned the term "women's agenda". It was not deemed appropriate to generalise in this way when the agenda in question is a particular one devised by the organisation in charge of the project. They argued that not all NGOs would agree with its content and therefore one should not regard it as an agenda for all women. In addition, others regarded the foreign funding behind the project as a problematic issue. Since it is difficult for many NGOs to access foreign funds, these kinds of funds therefore tend to gravitate towards the larger, more established organisations. "How can such a top-down campaign be framed in terms of all women?", they questioned.<sup>51</sup> In other words, there is resistance to individual organisations using the collective identity of the women's movement to further their own cause.

In a similar fashion, the second example recalls the experiences of one activist attending an annual conference that was organised by a pioneering women's organisation in Turkey. The conference was initially named after the organisation that organised the event. A discussion took place early on among the participants whereby it was agreed that the name should be changed, so that it would be more representative of the movement as a whole. Year after year, the name of the conference remained unchanged, however, and continued to carry the name of the host organisation. As the respondent recalled, questions began to be raised among the participants:

Some people started to think, 'Am I really here? Am I an outsider or an insider? Am I a guest, or an owner?' This led to discussions about problems between women's NGOs, so when we met we had no chance to talk about the real problems.<sup>52</sup>

This resistance towards the name of the conference and the subsequent debate expresses the political nature of relationships within the women's movement. Like in the example above, other groups reacted in this way because the name of one organisation was used to represent the whole of the women's movement. The conference was understood as an attempt by one organisation to further its own agenda in the slipstream of the women's movement as a whole. Although such political

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with a female activist, Istanbul, 24 June 2008. [B13]

<sup>52</sup> Interview with a female activist, Ankara, 01 April 2008. [C14]

struggles are by no means unique to Turkey or to the women's movement, it remains an issue to be borne in mind when formulating policy.

This struggle for position within the movement is further exemplified by a court case between two women's NGOs that took place in 2004. The case involved two large and well-known NGOs: Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) and the Women's Centre (*Kadın Merkezi* – KAMER).<sup>53</sup> WWHR is an Istanbul based group and KAMER is based in eastern Turkey, in Diyarbakir. WWHR accused the KAMER of plagiarising its publication materials, took the case to court, and won. The process, however, created a split within the women's movement at large. Some organisations sided with KAMER, arguing that the accusations made by WWHR had been petty and harmful to the movement. They argued that the women's movement should display more solidarity, and the court case was undermining this. Others supported WWHR, as the court decision was made in their favour and KAMER was shown to have been in the wrong. Although it may have not been the primary intention of WWHR actions, the case had a negative impact on both KAMER and the women's movement more broadly. In all three examples the internal politics of the movement thus come to take precedence over the issue of women's civil society activity. Whilst in theory one might expect the issues of women's rights to bind women's NGOs together (these are universal rights-based issues that all can agree on), in practice the political struggles for position and prestige within the movement often take priority.

Divisions of an ideological nature also contribute to the struggles that occur between women's NGOs. The first of four examples illustrating this relates to the relations between Kemalist and Kurdish NGOs taking part in the Annual Nationwide Women's Conference. In 2005, a more explicit conflict of interests surfaced between two camps of NGOs. One respondent described how a group of Kurdish women's NGOs wanted to organise a break-out session to discuss state violence against women. The secular, Kemalist NGOs refused to allow this meeting to take place, and even called the police in an effort to stop the break-out session from taking place. The break-out meeting did still go ahead, but according to the respondent, the actual purpose and aims of the conference were sidelined. The conference no longer remained a constructive platform for discussing women's status in Turkish society as the focus

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<sup>53</sup> This section is based on interview material from two interviews with female activists, interviews held in Ankara, 24 June 2008 [B13] and in Istanbul, 10 April 2008. [C9]

had shifted onto the internal divisions within the movement. This example also illustrates how some Kemalist NGOs view their role as guardians of the secular state, embracing a similar role to certain NGOs in the run-up to the 28 February Process and the post-modern coup in 1997 (as discussed in Chapter Four).

The ideological differences between the Islamist and secular women's NGOs are at the heart of these kinds of divisions. The legal reform campaign referred to earlier in this chapter offers an example of how the ideological divisions play out in practice. Yahoo! groups – an online discussion group – formed an important tool in the early phases of the campaign. The vice-president of an Islamic women's organisation took part in these discussions, and her suggestions were warmly welcomed by the group of online activists. However, in these discussions it was impossible to tell that she was wearing a headscarf. Her choice to wear a headscarf became a source of contention later on during the face-to-face meetings that followed. Here the differences between secular and Islamic ideological positions took over the agenda from the issues of penal code reform, and the working relationship between the activists became more difficult to manage. These differences kept resurfacing as the campaign matured and the participating Islamic NGOs elected to opt out from supporting certain clauses in the reforms. In particular, they opposed the demand to remove all references to morality, chastity and honour from the new penal code. Additionally the Islamic groups decided to opt out from lobbying on other issues where the reforms demanded by the campaign would have objected with their religious world view. For them, religious commitments came first. One secular women's activist interviewed summed up her reaction to this as she commented:

We had negative experiences with women who had deceived us. Some NGOs did not want to be against some issues. They did not want to be against some laws which were against women, but came from religion [...] they were not around when these issues were being discussed and did not lobby for these issues.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the overall success of the campaign, the ideological differences among women's NGOs are of such nature that it was difficult to reconcile these in one unified campaign. These boundaries are difficult to overcome and the different priorities that exist between secular and Islamic groups are difficult to reconcile.

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Ankara, 03 April 2008. [C5]



These ideological differences surface on various occasions. In early 2008 the new deputy director of the EU delegation to Turkey invited 12 representatives of women's NGOs to attend a meeting at his office. According to a respondent he was very welcoming and wished to learn about the kinds of problems that women's NGOs faced with EU funding. A representative from an Islamic women's NGO, however, moved away from this topic, and insisted on questioning the official over the reasons why the EU has not been more explicit in its support for a greater freedom to wear the headscarf in Turkey. Her actions decidedly undermined the meeting. As the respondent recalled:

“when she did this we had many things to say to her – we wanted to tell her to shut up. We wanted to continue the meeting about the problems of EU funds, but it was not a good platform for this anymore”.<sup>55</sup>

In other instances the ideological cleavages between secular and Islamic NGOs have undermined an entire campaign and demonstrate the tendency by NGOs to appropriate the civil societal space for particular ideological agendas. In the spring of 2008 women's NGOs planned to organise a campaign around a new issue: a government proposal for reforming the social security in Turkey. The campaign was prompted as NGOs concluded that the government proposals failed to address issues of gender equality. Under the proposed reforms, women still would not have gained equal benefits. A new campaign was organised, one which bore great resemblance to the Penal Code and Civil Code campaigns mentioned earlier, with the aim of bringing these thoughts to the attention of the government and the public. However, this time fundamental divisions amongst NGOs were exposed by the campaign rhetoric. Public protests, in particular the overarching message delivered by these demonstrations, became a divisive issue. The comments made by one respondent, who was a member of an Islamic NGO, lucidly illustrates this:

I personally wanted to attend some street protests about this reform, but they are shouting things like ‘this AKP government and this parliament are backward’. They are swearing at them because they are Muslim. I really feel that this is my problem, but I cannot attend these protests. They are swearing at us, so we cannot be together.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Interview with a female activist, Ankara, 01 April 2008. [C14]

<sup>56</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Istanbul, 14 April 2008. [C1]

The campaign was framed simultaneously as both promoting women's rights and protesting against the current government. The inadequacies of the reform agenda from a gender perspective were taken as evidence that the government adhered to a more conservatively religious understanding of social relations that was detrimental to further progress on women's rights. The lobbying efforts within the campaign were framed less in terms of universal women's rights and more in terms of a particular political agenda aimed at undermining the government. In this example, the secular face of the women's movement claimed centre ground within the campaign, defining it on the basis of a particular ideology and utilising the women's movement to legitimise this position.

#### *Sub-conclusion*

The examples presented here suggest that relationships between women's NGOs contain a level of tension that is unhelpful to collaborative efforts. The causes of this tension can be understood to be either political or ideological in nature. The term political refers to politics of the women's movement, where NGOs are playing for position, offering resistance where it appears that other organisations are gaining a more central, or higher, position. Ideological differences are another source of contention that surface in particular between those groups that have a strong secular or Islamic point of reference to their activities. Thus, even where NGOs may agree on the issues on which they campaign on, collaboration on activities around these issues remains difficult.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

NGO advocacy, in the broadest sense of the word, is about aspiring for change. In this context relations with governmental actors are important for negotiating change, and relations with other NGOs help to accumulate societal support and voice behind a campaign for change. Interpreting advocacy in this way in fact resonates well with the idea of Europeanisation, or policy harmonisation in the context of EU accession that has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis: Europeanisation and the EU pre-accession process are both premised on change. It is therefore useful to reflect on the character of these relationships and how this relates back to EU civil society policy in Turkey.

The legal and structural reforms have contributed to the development of a more enabling environment when it comes to NGO-government relations. The process of legal reform – one of the prerequisites of the EU accession process – has set these relationships on a more formal footing. The avenues through which NGOs can influence government policy have become more formalised, and in the shape of the Department of Associations civil society has gained a governmental actor that can facilitate this relationship. At the level of municipal government, there is a great deal of variety in how local government actors approach civil society, and how this plays out in NGO-government relations is contingent on the adaptability of the political positions each side holds. The variety of political influences that affect the character of local government means that different municipalities will offer their support to different kinds of NGOs on the basis of political affinity. Thus secular, Islamic or Kurdish NGOs can all identify access points at the level of local government.

There is, however, scope for developing these relations further. For example, the avenue for NGOs to contribute to legal reform processes remains narrow. Government departments, despite the existence of a facility where each department can co-sponsor NGO-run projects, remain reluctant to do so. At the level of local government the diversity of political opinions has proven to be a double-edged sword, as this can contribute to a political backlash against NGOs whose political ideas do not conflate with those of local government. It seems there are distinct political limitations to how far NGO-local government relations can develop at the moment. One persuasive explanatory factor can be found in the higher transaction costs that governmental actors face. In other words, NGO partnerships need to deliver politically worthwhile outcomes before governmental actors truly want to engage with NGOs.

Likewise, relations between NGOs exhibit both opportunities and shortcomings. The examples from the women's movement show that NGOs do have the potential, under the right circumstances, to successfully influence government policymaking at the highest level. The question is, however, to what extent are the experiences of the Penal Code and Civil Code campaigns replicable elsewhere within civil society activity? Among women's NGOs, at least, opportunities for collaboration have been decidedly limited by two factors. Competition for position on one side and ideological differences on the other have both contributed to the lack of progress in reconciling the dissonances within the movement. These dynamics agree with a

Gramscian reading of the situation: a struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic voices is being played within the women's movement.

How do these observations compare with the assumptions that underline liberal democratic political theory and the Europeanisation processes of EU accession? Since advocacy NGOs are primarily engaged in processes of change, there is a natural affinity between the policy harmonisation and advocacy activities. In theory, advocacy NGOs epitomise liberal civil society, constituting a sphere of activity that is autonomous from the state and that challenges the state to change. In practice, however, NGOs do not operate in a terrain that is fully independent or autonomous. As I have shown, politics play a significant role in determining what kind of relationships NGOs can build. Neither is there often agreement on what it is that NGOs ought to lobby for when engaging with governmental actors. To paraphrase Najam's definition of advocacy, there is no one "right thing" that NGOs can prod the government with.

Given the existence of competitive relationships within civil society, and the essentialist nature of the debate between the various voices within civil society, is there any scope for a successful strategy as far as the accession process goes? Somewhat counter-intuitively, the undemocratic rhetoric that emerges is an important phase in the democratising process. The schisms between NGOs originate from important societal debates that should not be ignored and which need to be sustained. One could regard them as growing pains in the context of democratisation. In this context, the long-term goal of the accession process should be the determination of common denominators for public debate that guarantee freedom of expression. This should contain parameters that ensure tolerance prevails in the heated and important debates that take place.

## **6 The Landscape of Civil Society Funding in Turkey**

The purpose of this chapter is to draw a picture of the funding environment for civil society in Turkey, and describe the way NGOs behave in this environment. The aim is to understand how the availability of EU funds, coupled with the relative unavailability of domestic funds, influences the fundraising choices NGOs make. Domestic civil society funding is difficult for advocacy groups to obtain, especially if their work is focused on issues such as human rights. The current culture of giving has not yet familiarised itself with the concepts of advocacy and NGOs. This lack of domestic funding sources creates a natural push for advocacy NGOs to seek external funds.

The chapter offers an outline of domestic funding opportunities in Turkey and juxtaposes this with the system of EU funding for NGOs. The chapter begins with an account of the nature of the funding relationships between donors and CSOs, sketching out the trends in donor aims and the ways in which these aims become operationalised in their funding frameworks. The second section sketches the contours for the overall landscape of civil society funding in Turkey and points out the opportunities and shortcomings this poses for advocacy NGOs. The third section takes a closer look at the domestic actors involved in the operationalisation of EU civil society policy. The fourth and final section places the magnifying glass on NGOs, taking account of NGO attitudes and approaches. The argument put forth is that these organisations take very different approaches when faced with the decision of whether to seek external assistance or not. These approaches are contingent on how NGOs view the role of the EU in Turkey, what their experience of Europeanisation has been thus far, and the extent to which the organisations have chosen to either internalise or resist the EU influence upon them. These observations feed into the conclusion that the nature of the changes this funding is effectively sponsoring, and the outcomes of EU civil society funding, will remain uncertain.

### **6.1 Donor aims**

Donor support for civil society is intricately linked with assumptions about broader processes of development, to which NGOs allegedly contribute with their actions. The underlying argument is one where strong civil society (often referred to as one that is

populated by a high number of active CSOs) is seen conducive to a democratic society, and a weak civil society (one where only a few civil society organisations are active) is associated with less democratic states. Additionally, in the EU context in particular, vibrant civil society is expected to assist in the formulation and effective execution of policy. It was in such a spirit that Chapter Two described the dual aims of donor policies towards civil society as achieving democratic development and sustainable economic development. This logic can be traced back to the work of Alexis de Tocqueville as well as to the work of his contemporary, the liberal theorist John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). They both saw the growth in government apparatus as a challenge to political liberty and independence (Held 1996 p. 105). Robert Putnam has echoed these views as he argues that civil society “inculcates democratic habits” (Putnam 1995). In practice, the way these observations have been operationalised has tended to lead to policies of NGO-building. Chapter Three demonstrated this by outlining the common denominators that underline EU civil society policy in Europe, the Mediterranean region and Turkey: achieving democratisation and greater policy effectiveness through the funding of NGOs. However, the consensus position on what policies ought to be pursued also represents a hegemony of particular donor-led ideas (Hurt 2003). The relationship between NGO-building and inculcation of democratic habits may be rather tenuous.

The EU accession process offers two levels at which to operationalise policy towards civil society: to support broader systemic reform or more specific sectoral agendas (Blair 1997). On the one hand, the EU as the accession negotiator can focus on establishing an enabling environment by improving the rules and regulations under which CSOs operate, which is what political and policy Europeanisation in part aims to achieve. On the other hand, the EU as a donor entity can extend its support to CSOs that can bolster citizens’ voice in a variety of policy areas. In this way, civil society activities can help to internalise new modes of behaviour and in so doing contribute towards societal Europeanisation. In most cases, Blair argues, these aims of donor funding lead to support for a particular group of NGOs within the broader fabric of civil society: advocacy groups dedicated to modern socio-political matters such as women’s rights, human rights and environment. Such support may lead to a cyclical strategy, where civil society funding, by virtue of voicing citizen concerns and pushing for a more responsive government, feeds back into building an enabling environment (1997).

Out of the various civil society actors, it has been NGOs that have become the most important partners for donors. This is because of the complementarity between donor aims and expected NGO behaviour. As Thomas Carothers observers, NGOs are favoured for what are perceived as their pro-democratic functions of increasing citizen participation in activities that aim to hold the state accountable for its actions. These NGOs are also seen to be non-partisan advocates of discussion on neutral issues, moving away from traditional boundaries of political ideology. Hence, the funding programmes often end up targeting a small segment of NGOs on the outskirts of local civil society, staffed by youthful, westernised professionals with much common ground with the donors (Carothers 1999). Behind this style of operation stands a liberal agenda, which understands public interest in terms alien to the local context. It is NGOs, more than any other type of civil society actor that fits the mould they have in mind.

Finally, donors tend to work with an agenda for change – this is certainly the case for the EU in Turkey – and NGOs make for very suitable partners in this context. One reason suggested is that NGOs are responsive to the bureaucratisation and routinisation that come with donor funding, able to comply with the bureaucratic minutiae that is at the heart of donor-funded projects (Howell and Lind 2009 p.35). Additionally, as Howell and Pearce have pointed out, unlike the market, NGOs are not-for-profit, and unlike the state they are “non-authoritative” (2001b p. 122). NGOs offer an alternative to the other possible partners who may not be quite so enthused by the donor agenda for change. Donors see their aims to constitute a neutral, value-free approach, forming a template ready for use in any context (Howell and Pearce 2001b pp. 39-40). Yet, aspiring for change in the areas of democratisation and policy effectiveness, and seeing NGOs as the preferred civil society partners, clearly forms an agenda in itself. Critically, as both of the above authors have noted, such preference for NGOs limits the breadth of organisations that are considered as potential partners in donor-driven programmes. The existence of such agendas among donors has a direct impact on their behaviour and on the choices NGOs make, as they aspire to (or reject) the donor demands.

Whilst the EU is not the only source of external funding for NGOs in Turkey, it does represent the most prominent donor both in terms of the amount of funding it offers and the attention it has gained from the NGO community. The other donor institution offering a considerable amount of funding is the Open Society Institute. In

2007 the total operating costs of the Open Society Foundation Turkey amounted to \$2,3 million. The foundation supported initiatives in EU integration, HIV/AIDS, education reform and promotion of the rights of the Roma. This funding was divided across a number of recipients, including universities, think-tanks, hospitals, schools as well as NGOs (Open Society Institute 2007). German foundations have also been involved in NGO funding. Heinrich Böll Foundation (affiliated with Green politics), Friedrich Naumann Foundation (affiliated with liberal politics), Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Konrad Adenauer Foundation (both promoting social democracy) all have offices in Istanbul and offer funding towards a range of social activities. Given the strong links with German political parties, these foundations tend to support NGOs with similar political views, however the funding provided is not particularly extensive. It is aimed at facilitating workshops, meetings and general distribution of information, but rarely extends to projects or any long-term financial commitments.<sup>57</sup> Finally, a number of embassies offer small grants to NGOs, but such programmes tend to come and go, as they are often set up by enthusiastic members of staff who receive the support of the current ambassador.<sup>58</sup> Other sources of funding do therefore exist, but these do not constitute a significant alternative to the funding provided by the EU. Most of the funders, with the possible exception of the Soros foundation, are very focused in the financial support they offer, and even then offer their funds towards a limited range of activities. It is therefore unlikely that these funders have had significant effect on the role of the EU as the central hub for external funding of NGOs in Turkey.

#### *Operationalisation of donor funding*

In practice, the modality for delivering funds to civil society is through projects. Technical competence is prioritised among donor and NGO staff, which often comes at the expense of paying attention to the local institutional, political and social realities (Cassen 1994 p. 137). Research on civil society funding in Russia, for example, has shown how donor support has been largely limited to projects that perceive civil society as a third sector inhabited by professionalised NGOs (Crotty 2003; Hemment 2004; Henderson 2002). The donor agenda in Russia has subsequently suffered from a

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with a representative of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Istanbul, 03 July 2008. [B11]

<sup>58</sup> Interview with a representative of the Finnish Embassy in Turkey, Ankara, 04 April, 2008 [B12]



lack of contextualisation and misdirection. Short-term projects are unlikely to build civil society, as this does not correspond with the available historical experience. The modern European third sector is the outcome of a specific historical process and its duplication in a different context therefore unlikely to succeed. As projects take centre stage, technical and bureaucratic issues are prioritised at the expense of broader contextual and political concerns.

Projects have indeed had a significant role in shaping the way in which donors engage with civil society actors. In his discussion of the multifaceted nature of project-related donor funding, Alan Fowler identifies three key conditions that shape the project experience: the nature of the pre-conditions placed on the funds by the giver; the level of administrative burden that is imposed; and the stability of the funding in terms of predictability and continuity (Fowler 1997). The way these three issues play out in the project context tends to straitjacket the recipients, particularly in terms of how received funds can be used. Projects tend also to require a high administrative commitment. Finally, project funding is based on short-term goals and often remains conditional on periodic performance reviews, making it a rather unreliable source of income. The appropriateness of these donor aspirations to strengthen democracy and policy effectiveness through civil society related initiatives needs to be evaluated against the reaction this generates among the recipients in civil society.

## **6.2 Domestic funding opportunities for civil society in Turkey**

This section traces the contours of domestic funding in an effort to explain how the availability of funds within Turkey shapes NGO attitudes towards external funding opportunities. The culture of giving in Turkey together with the legal framework governing philanthropy make it more difficult for advocacy NGOs to benefit from domestic funding. Reliance on short-term, foreign, project-based funding in turn means that their activities are less sustainable in the long term.

In 2005, the *CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report*<sup>59</sup> for Turkey was published (TUSEV 2005). The data collection for the Civil Society Index (CSI) included secondary sources, a population survey, stakeholder consultations, a media review and

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<sup>59</sup> The CIVICUS Civil Society Index reports are compiled by CSOs at the country level that offer an assessment of the current state of civil society by employing the “Diamond Tool” developed by Helmut Anheier. This is a four-dimensional assessment of the “health” of civil society based on the criteria of “structure”, “values”, “environment” and “impact”(CIVICUS 2010; TUSEV 2005).

a series of case studies (TUSEV 2005 p. 27). The population survey contained a sample of 1536 interviews, and in the stakeholder consultation 452 interviews were carried out with foundation managers. These interview results formed the basis for a sister study entitled *Trends in Individual Giving and Foundation Practices* (Carkoğlu 2006). The following table summarises the key findings from the population survey:

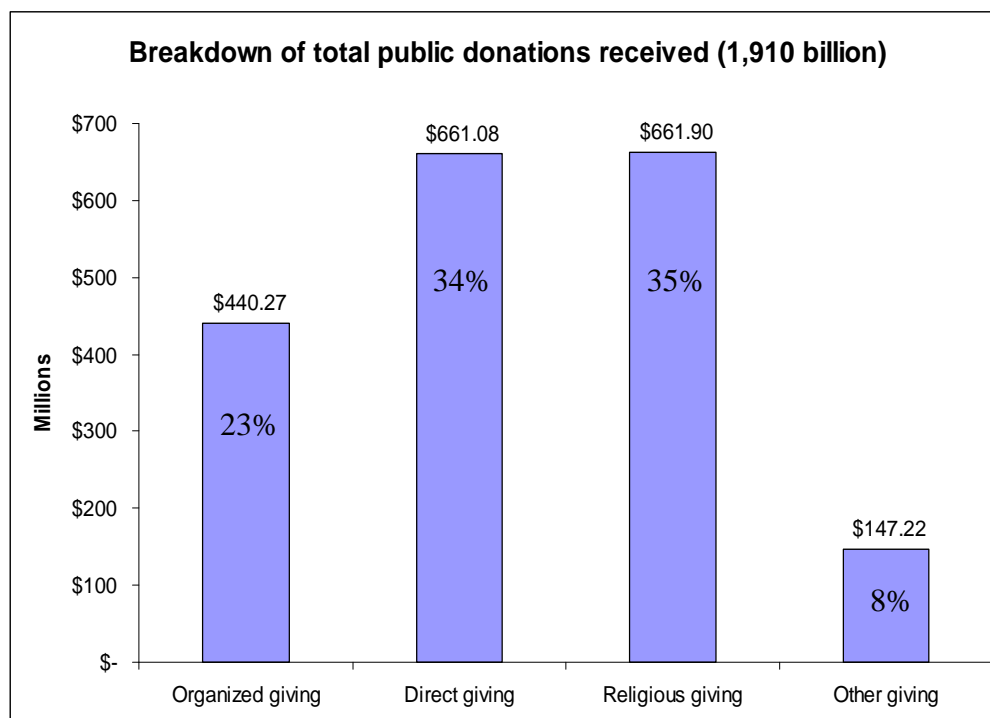
- In 2004, individuals donated a total **\$1.910 billion** in Turkey.
- **80%** of the public donate money each year. Of these:
  - **87%** preferred to give donations directly to individuals, without an institutional intermediary (e.g. NGOs)
  - **82%** of respondents preferred to support a relative, neighbour or someone from the same region
  - **70%** of respondents felt it was the responsibility of the state or the most wealthy to look after the needy in society
  - **70%** were motivated by tax-exemption benefits

**Table 4:** Summary of key findings from “Trends in Individual Giving” (Carkoğlu 2006)

Whilst it is somewhat uncertain how accurate these projections are, they nevertheless point to some interesting general observations. For example, as these results are based on interviews, it is possible that these figures reflect aspirational rather than real donations. There are also religious obligations for philanthropy in Islam that play a part here: almsgiving is one of the pillars of Islam, requiring each individual to give a small percentage of their wealth to charity annually. These donations are distributed by mosques or given directly to the poor in the community. Respondents may have been inclined to report donations at a level they feel they ought to have contributed, for example, to street beggars, rather than what their real donations were.

The statistics also speak to the importance of a personal connection when making philanthropic donations. The Islamic tradition encourages donations to be made directly to individuals, emphasising a personal connection with the recipient. The role of institutional intermediaries is minimal, possibly because it cannot add anything to this giving relationship. The results also suggest that the culture of giving stems from a sense of solidarity between the individual donor and the beneficiary, expressing a clear preference to support a relative, neighbour or someone from the same region.

The survey results point to a culture of giving that leaves relatively little room for NGOs to benefit from public philanthropy. This culture, with its origins in the Islamic traditions of giving, constitutes a method of complementing social services provided by the state. In effect, donations serve the purpose of an informal social service, making up for state funds where they are insufficient on their own to provide for the less fortunate. An informal family support network has traditionally supplemented state provision of welfare, and the informal donations made by the public can be regarded as an extension of this system. On the other hand, 70 per cent of the respondents regarded the state as the primary actor in protecting the interests of the least fortunate in society. In-between the Islamic tradition of giving with emphasis on a personal connection between the donor and the beneficiary, and the tendency to place responsibility on the state to look after the less fortunate, NGOs are likely to find it difficult to solicit financial contributions from society. Figure 1 below helps to illustrate in monetary terms the breakdown of donations between different areas:



**Figure 1:** Breakdown of total public donations into four categories, adapted (Carkoğlu 2006)

Figure 1 elucidates the double bind in which NGOs find themselves. The proportion of funds donated both as direct giving (donations made informally and intermittently to individuals) and religious giving (this includes organised giving to mosques and other religious institutions as fulfilment of religious obligation) is significantly higher than what is given to NGOs in the form of organised giving (donations to all non-religious

institutions). It is the “lack of structured funding practices”, the CIS report opines, that limits NGO access to funds (TUSEV 2005 p. 13).

We can find out a bit more about this category of “organised giving”. Where individuals choose to make donations to CSOs, 19 per cent make their donations to the Turkish Aeronautical Association (*Türk Hava Kurumu* – THK). The THK was established in 1925 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and has remained a popular organisation to offer donations to. Atatürk attached great importance to aviation, not least because his adopted daughter, Sabiha Gökçen, was the world’s first female fighter pilot. Her story became embedded in the broader secular narrative about progress on women’s rights, and was taken as evidence of a progressive, modern society that was developing the republic. The THK has thus become a symbol of Kemalism and secularism. It remains the only aviation association in Turkey and traditionally it has been the only organisation allowed to receive the skins of animals sacrificed in religious celebrations as donations, and to make an income from this.<sup>60</sup> Thus, a significant portion of the total donations under the organised giving category is taken by one organisation alone. In addition, among those who chose to make donations to organisations, the three most preferred categories were “helping the needy, education, and helping the handicapped. The three least preferred causes were “consumer rights, human rights and animal protection” (Carkoğlu 2006). In conclusion, the organisations that are likely to find it most difficult to access domestic funds are NGOs that are non-religious and focused on rights-based work.

The above discussion makes the case that in the current climate CSOs – and advocacy NGOs in particular – have limited possibilities for raising funds domestically. There is some real potential within the domestic giving framework that needs to be noted – a genuine interest in philanthropy, indicated by the proportion of population that are active donors each year, as well as by the total amount donated. Yet Turkey is lacking in a culture of philanthropy that would instinctively support NGOs. The prevalence of both ad hoc giving to individuals and religiously-organised giving means that donations to secular NGOs are not intuitive, and the avenues for funding these organisations are not clearly marked. Although one should not take funding to be the life and soul of civil society activity, it nevertheless seems reasonable to argue that

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<sup>60</sup> In recent years this practice has been challenged as some municipalities have allowed religious organisations to arrange such collections.

the potential of advocacy NGOs is encumbered by the unavailability of domestic funding.

How does the case of Turkey compare with the funding opportunities available in the United Kingdom? This brief discussion intends to provide some frame of reference for the Turkish experience in the context of Europe. Two broad conclusions can be arrived at from looking at the data for UK.<sup>61</sup> First of all, individual giving tends to concentrate heavily around research and services: medical research receives 17 per cent of the total given by individuals to charitable causes, religious causes 16 per cent, hospitals and hospices 11 per cent of total giving. The report mentions human rights under the category of “other”, sharing a 7 per cent stake with other causes such as rescue services, and refugees (NCVO 2007 p.20). In this sense, advocacy work receives a notably low proportion of the total giving available, reflecting a similar state of affairs as that in Turkey. However, whilst rights-based advocacy may not feature prominently among the most popular causes, the preferred methods of funding do seem more sustainable. 29 per cent of all giving was donated through regular giving (defined as donations made by direct debit, payroll giving and membership fees), of which 24 per cent is made through monthly direct debit payments (compared with 18 per cent in cash). This style of giving ensures a continuous flow of funds until the donor chooses to discontinue these payments and stands in stark contrast with the ad-hoc and unstructured nature of giving in Turkey.

#### *NGO views on domestic funding*

Interviews with representatives of advocacy NGOs revealed further obstacles to domestic fundraising. Advocacy NGOs’ work is perceived as troublemaking by the broader public. Despite working on potentially less political and sensitive agendas, for example on environmental protection or consumer rights, this still constitutes an agenda for change. The NGO is advocating for change in government policy in order to improve environmental protection measures, for example. Asking for change conveys an underlining message of unhappiness with the present state of affairs – that the government in some way has got it wrong. Whilst this is the essence of what it means to be an advocacy NGO, others often view this position differently:

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<sup>61</sup> The UK is rather unique in carrying out an annual survey on individual giving that is published as an annual report.

Most support goes to health and education because these are safe areas with no controversy because the NGOs are not criticising the government. Businesses are worried about supporting NGOs that criticise government policy because they might also be labelled as questionable.<sup>62</sup>

Money from abroad is very important to us, as there is no money forthcoming in Turkey. Even one very well known Turkish financier told me that he really would like to support our work, but he was reluctant as he felt this would label him as an “enemy of the state”.<sup>63</sup>

For NGOs to question, or problematise the role of the state in Turkey is often regarded as opposition to the state – not constructive criticism. The public reluctance to support NGOs can be explained, at least in part, by this concern of being labelled troublemakers. Chapter Four discussed the state tradition of regarding civil society as an ally of secularism and the tendency to bifurcate civil society along the official (secular) and informal (non-secular) lines. Similar dynamics seem to be at play here, where advocacy work is vulnerable to becoming politicised against the polarised, black and white canvas of Turkish politics. It is difficult for NGOs in Turkey to work alongside the state: you are either with the state, or against it.

The difficulties NGOs face in achieving tax exemption status illustrates another tricky hurdle in trying to raise money from domestic sources. In order to qualify for tax exemption, each NGO requires an approval from the level of government to assure it is indeed conducting philanthropic work. The minimum standards require all applicants to work in one of the following four areas: education, arts/culture, health, or scientific research (TUSEV 2004). For comparison, the UK Charities Act from 2006 lists 13 different meanings of a charitable purpose, offering a significantly broader range of activities that are considered to be for public benefit and therefore enjoying from tax benefits (OPSI 2006). To date, a mere 700 out of the approximately 80,000 associations in Turkey, and 170 of the 4,500 foundations have the status of a public benefit organisation and are able to return tax exemption gains to their donors. This equates to 0.875 per cent of all associations and 3.78 per cent of foundations

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with a women’s rights activist, Istanbul, August 15 2007. [C2]

<sup>63</sup> Interview with a director a human rights NGO, Istanbul, 24 June 2008. [B1]

(TUSEV 2005). The narrow interpretation of what is meant by public benefit has implications for advocacy NGOs in particular:

The NGOs that have achieved tax exemption status are almost all working in service delivery, and businesses are keen to support these organisations, as they gain tax benefits also. Our application for tax exemption status was declined on the basis that our organisation focuses only on women's issues, not on the public at large. So advocacy groups really lose out.<sup>64</sup>

To compound the effect of this policy, the report on *Trends in Individual Giving* (table 4) showed that 70 per cent of individual donors are motivated to make a donation in return for tax exemption benefits (Carkoğlu 2006). The limited scope for tax exemptions significantly dampens the chances of NGOs finding domestic funding.

What to make, then, of the opportunities and shortcomings present within the domestic landscape of civil society funding? Whilst a significant amount of money is donated each year to charitable purposes in Turkey, the way in which it is distributed generates pockets within civil society that are isolated. The areas most affected by funding limitations relate to new types of charitable activity, such as advocacy. These are new in the sense that they have not historically been part of Turkish civil society, or they alternatively are taken to resemble the trouble-making organisations responsible for the political unrest in the 1970s or 1980s and therefore avoided. This need not mean that financial support is the central essence of civil society activity, however, for it is entirely conceivable for NGOs to function effectively with minimal funding, as many do. However, for those advocacy NGOs that deem improved financial support beneficial to their activities, the domestic opportunities for increased funding are very limited. It makes sense, therefore, for such NGOs to concentrate their efforts on funding opportunities available elsewhere.

### **6.3 The EU funding process**

This section describes the available funding mechanisms and outlines the role of certain domestic actors that play a key role in channelling funds from the EU to civil

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with a women's rights activist, Istanbul, August 15 2007. [C2]

society. There are three financial instruments through which Turkish NGOs are able to access EU funding. The main instrument is the budget allocation for pre-accession assistance, an annual allocation of financial support to Turkey directly.<sup>65</sup> This money is channelled to the Turkish government to facilitate the harmonisation process in areas such as adopting the EU *acquis* and meeting other requirements for political and economic reform. In 2008 this allocation amounted to approximately €540 million, rising to €654 million in 2010 (see figure 2). In fact, since the start of the pre-accession process in 2004 the annual funding has increased by a factor of 2.5. Within the harmonising process, funding for civil society falls under the criterion of political reform, where the Turkish government and the EU Delegation in Turkey come together annually to decide on priority areas of funding. All the EU funds available through this instrument are distributed through the Central Finance and Contracts Unit (CFCU). Another important channel is the Civil Society Development Centre (CSDC), an independent organisation that acts as a go-between the CFCU and NGOs. The roles of both the CFCU and the CSDC will be discussed at length later.

The other two financial instruments are linked to the central budget of the EU. These are community programmes and thematic programmes, and Turkish NGOs are eligible to apply for a number of funds within these programmes. The application process for these latter two is located at Brussels, and the funds through these instruments are allocated largely to cooperative projects requiring European partner organisations. Whilst the research discussed here focuses on the funding made available within the confines of the pre-accession process (the first financial instrument), it is important to note that other avenues through which NGOs can access EU funding exist also. In particular, this illustrates the complex web of funding channels that NGOs are required to negotiate in the EU context:

Access to EU funds is getting more complicated by the day. The application process is totally complicated for the NGOs, and for the capacity they have, but it's also getting more complicated in terms of access points.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> This section is largely based on an interview with a senior EU civil servant, EU Delegation for Turkey, Ankara, April 03 2008 [B5].

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*



The EU Delegation in Ankara emphasises the need for civil society funding as a way of expanding the impact of the political reforms that are taking place, by extending the political debate to the level of citizens. NGOs are seen as key intermediaries in this process. However, very little consultation takes place with NGOs on what the priorities ought to be:

We [the EU Delegation] are bad at consultation. We come up with ideas internally and take them to civil society representatives to make sure that these ideas can “fly”. To do this we either consult individual and well-known NGOs, or we have larger roundtable meetings.<sup>67</sup>

The EU delegation receives a lot of criticism from outside that our funding goes only to the elite NGOs. This is certainly not the case; we have data on the geographical spread of our NGO funding. I don’t think that only the most professional NGOs based in Ankara and Istanbul have capacity benefit from our funds.<sup>68</sup>

It is the EU representatives and the Turkish government who ultimately decide on priorities. The initiative for civil society involvement in decision-making comes from the EU Delegation, not from the organisations themselves. Nor is the process particularly participatory, as NGOs have no role at the early stages of this process when priorities are negotiated. Instead, the consultation meetings become the means of furthering an agenda that has already been decided upon elsewhere. The decision as to how NGOs are supported to take part in the political debate, and through what kinds of projects, is made through a top-down process with minimal consultation.

The medley of three tables (figures 2, 3 and 4) that end this section, offer a brief numeric journey through the story of EU funding in Turkey, and give an insight to the way in which financial support is distributed. As figure 2 shows, the amount of financial support has been steadily climbing up throughout the past six years. As shown in Chapter Three, under the policy of Civil Society Dialogue, the EU has made a commitment to channel ten per cent of this annual total to civil society. Therefore, a proportion of any increase in total funding becomes available to CSOs. The first half of figure 3 demonstrates how the total assistance for 2007 was divided between the three main recipients: the EU secretary general (Turkish governmental department responsible for the EU harmonisation process), government ministries and civil

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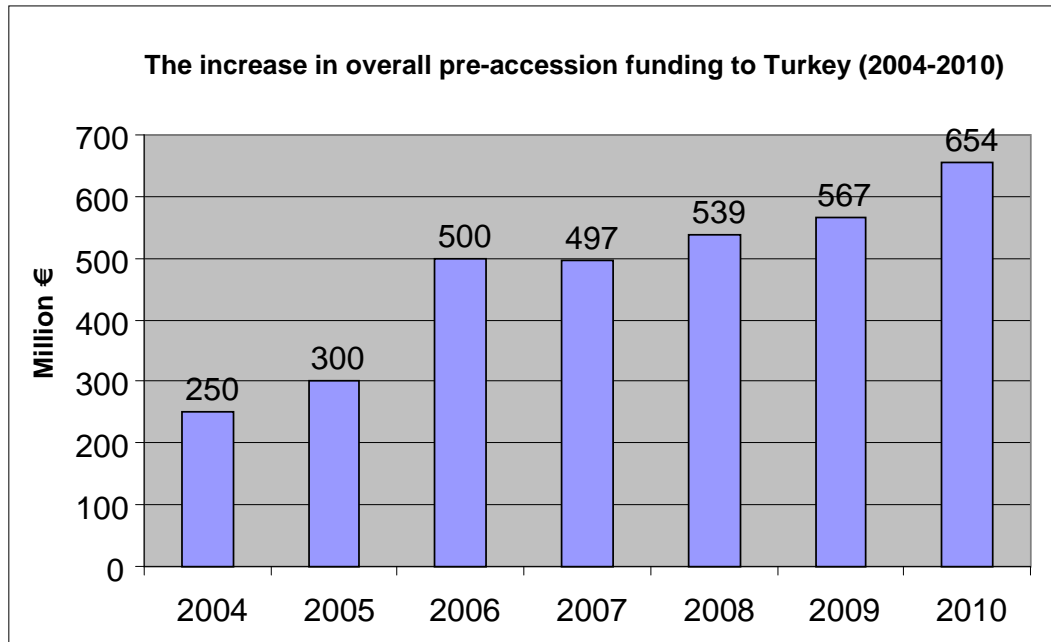
<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

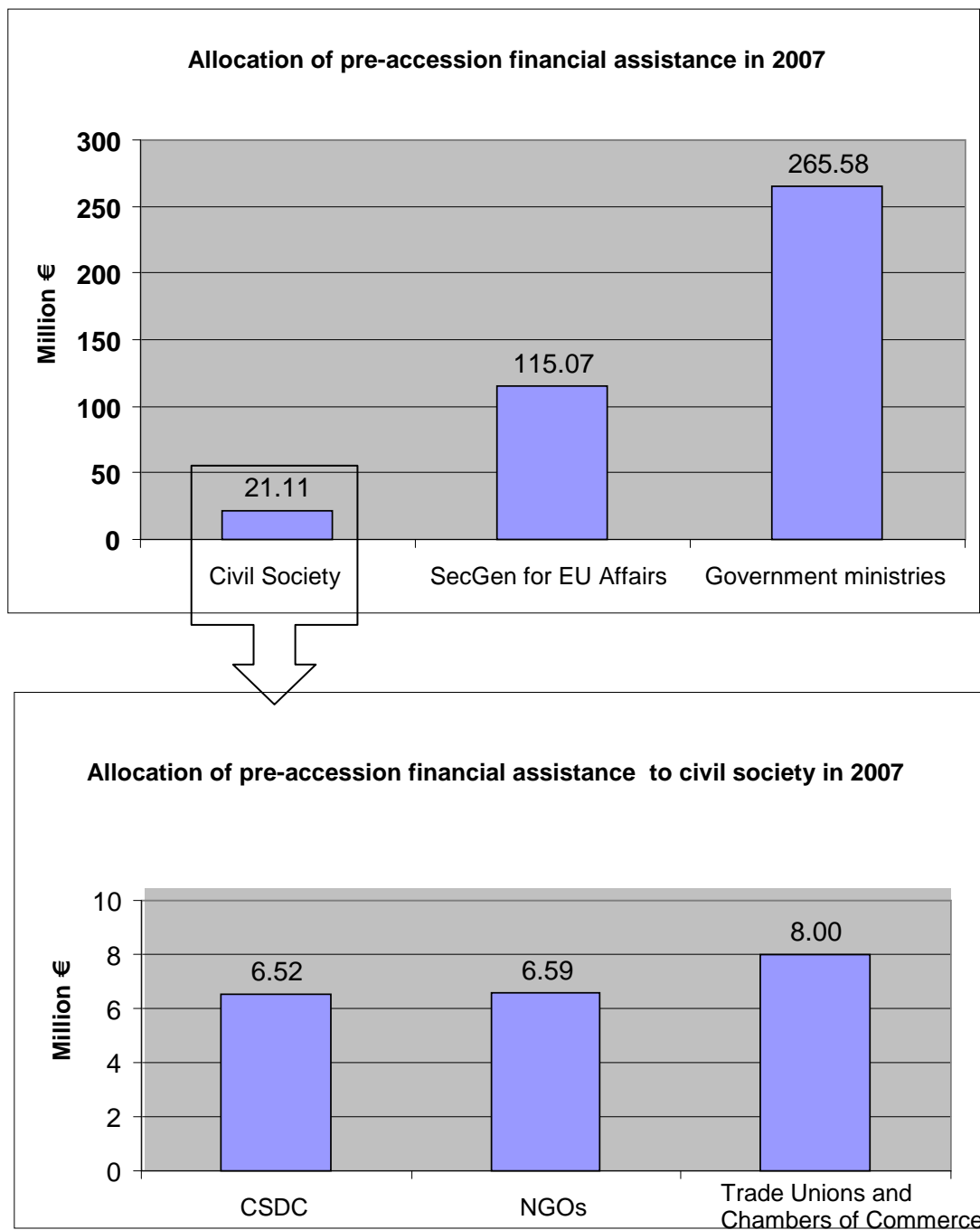
society. The second half of figure 3 provides a further breakdown of how financing was distributed within civil society.

The relatively sizeable amount of funding received by trade unions and chambers of commerce requires clarification. First of all, this is a clear indication that the EU does not see civil society only in terms of NGOs. Instead, EU pursues multiple strategies, which in this case involves organisations that are closely linked with economic development. The financial support from the EU was channelled into two large projects, both of which fall under the broader programme of Civil Society Dialogue. One project aimed to strengthen the dialogue and cooperation between the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (*Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği* – TOBB), an umbrella organisation with 364 members in Turkey and the European Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBRES), in so doing promoting the integration of Turkish and European business communities (European Commission 2006a). The objective of the second project was to strengthen contacts and mutual exchange of experience between the trade unions of Turkey and trade unions of EU member states. Four national trade union confederations from Turkey were involved (TÜRK-İŞ, HAK-İŞ, DİSK and KESK) as well as confederations from seven European countries (France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Slovakia, Sweden and Greece) (European Commission 2006c). Thus, whilst civil society funding reaches a variety of stakeholders and not only NGOs, through the Civil Society Dialogue programme the funding rationale continues to be tightly linked to the pre-accession process and Europeanisation.

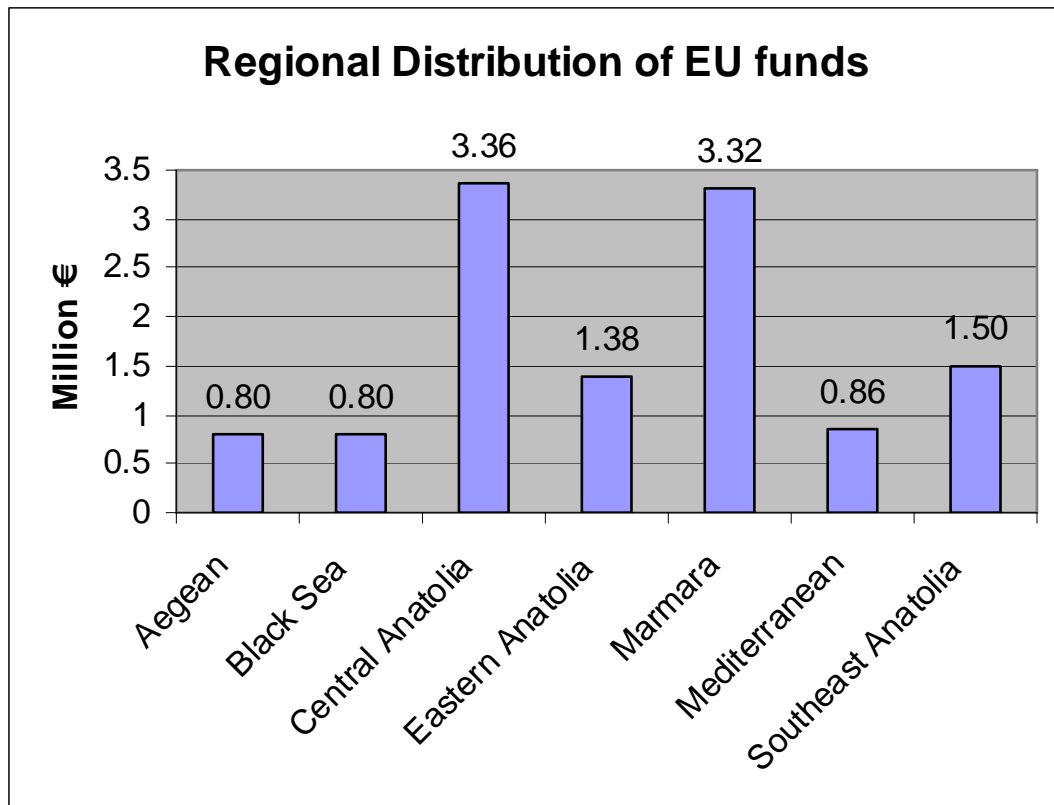
Figure 4 shows how funding has been distributed across the five geographical regions. The results show that Central Anatolia (this region includes funding for Ankara) and Marmara (includes Istanbul) are the two regions far ahead of others in terms of funds received. These results question the claim referred to earlier that the EU offices in Turkey that funding is equally distributed. Although funding reaches all eight regions of Turkey, there are significant differences in the amount of funding each region receives. A significant proportion of NGOs is located in Ankara and Istanbul, as being near the centres of power makes it easier to gain access to funding. It seems much work is still required if more equal access to funds for NGOs across Turkey is being aspired to.



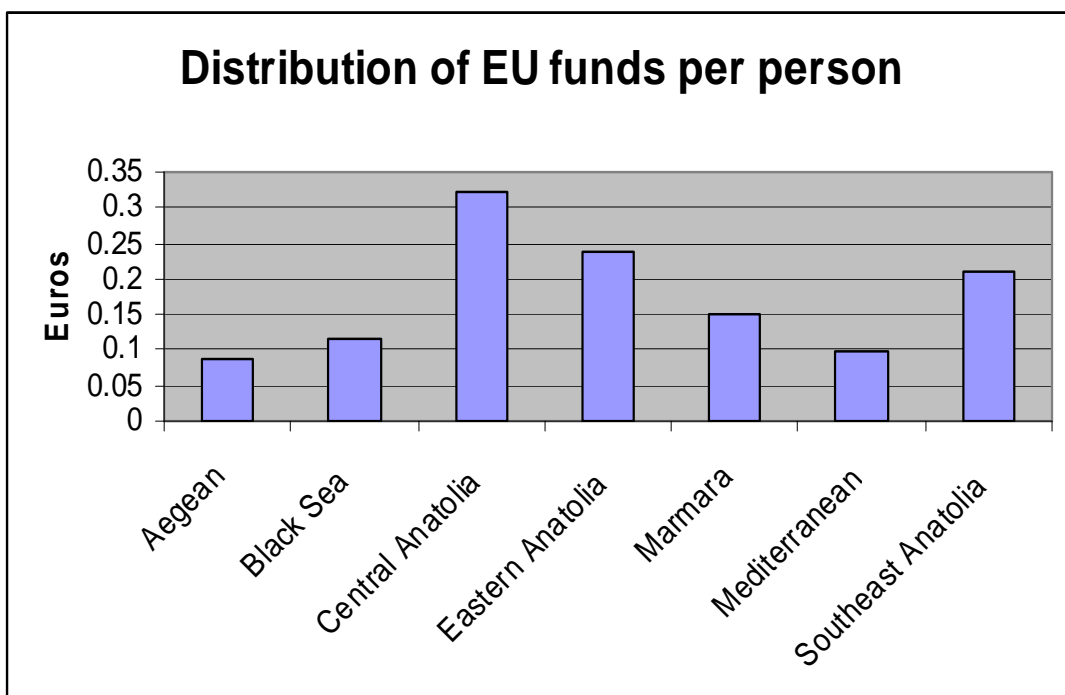
**Figure 2:** Increase in the overall pre-accession funding to Turkey (European Commission 2010a).



**Figure 3:** Total allocation of pre-accession financial assistance in 2007 (top), and the allocation within this to civil society (bottom) (European Commission 2010b)



**Figure 4:** Distribution of EU funds by region (Central Anatolia includes Ankara, whilst Marmara includes Istanbul)<sup>69</sup>



**Figure 5:** Distribution of EU funds per person within each region<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Based on analysis of reports provided by the EU Delegation for Turkey.

<sup>70</sup> Based on population statistics from 2007 (Turkish Statistical Institute 2010)

However, when in figure 5 we reflect on these figures in terms of total populations within each region, the three peaks that emerge in figure 4 flatten out somewhat. Although Central Anatolia remains the main recipient of funding, the amount of funding distributed to the Marmara region is more in line with the other regions. In addition, Eastern Anatolia emerges as a region that receive more funding per head than the crude numbers in figure 4 indicate, joining Southeast Anatolia as a key recipient. Therefore, when we consider EU funding in terms of regional populations, the logic behind the funding strategy becomes clearer. Central Anatolia and Marmara regions receive significant amounts of funding, because these regions are the two most densely populated regions. The two regions in eastern Turkey – Eastern Anatolia and Southeast Anatolia – have relatively low population densities, but in the end receive more funding per head than Marmara region. Furthermore, these eastern regions are among the poorest in Turkey, having suffered from a limited investment in infrastructure due to the unstable political situation in the region. These findings suggest that the logic behind EU funding takes into consideration the number of people and the relative need of the population living within a given region.

#### *Domestic intermediaries in the EU funding process*

Since the preparations for accession negotiations begun, the EU has shifted responsibility for many of the procedural operations to Turkish actors. Civil society funding is one such area, where the CFCU and the CSDC have played an important role. These roles offer a useful insight to the changing nature of civil society funding since the start of the negotiations.

Central Finance and Contracts Unit (CFCU): The CFCU is the key intermediary, and the most important governmental actor in civil society funding. It is the governmental body with financial oversight over all EU-funded programmes. As has been the case with all recent candidate countries, the CFCU was established as part of the accession negotiations in order to develop an umbrella structure aimed at transferring the contracting authority of the European Commission to the Turkish government. As such, it is part and parcel of the policy Europeanisation processes that the accession negotiations have sparked. Since 2003 the CFCU has gradually come to shoulder the responsibility for budgeting, tendering, contracting, and all other financial aspects of EU-funded programmes in Turkey, including grants to NGOs. Most of its

employees have a background in the civil service, having worked at government ministries, or as lawyers and accountants. Many regard this as a simple technical switch, a response to calls to manage the overall funding processes more effectively and to shifting more responsibility onto Turkish institutions – as per the requirements of the pre-accession process. The CFCU is an integral part of the bureaucratic-technical framework of the EU pre-accession process.

The introduction of the CFCU to the funding process denotes a real shift in the EU-civil society relationship. Since the start of the accession process, the EU delegation in Turkey has developed relationships with a broad variety of stakeholders. Many activities that were previously a direct responsibility of the EU offices in Turkey have been delegated to others. By creating additional levels of administration between the EU offices and the recipient NGOs, the changes have led to a layering effect in civil society funding processes. The shift in the relationship is captured by the following comment:

Before 2003, when the debate was about reforms required for Turkey to reach the pre-accession stage, we were working closely with civil society actors to steer the agenda and the debate. Once the pre-accession negotiations started, the priority for us shifted from civil society to public institutions that are required to do the actual harmonisation work. I don't think the role of NGOs has changed, but the spectrum has changed, and now they are one among many important actors.<sup>71</sup>

From an NGO perspective, the change that has taken place is more than a technical amendment to operations. The introduction of the CFCU, a third party, to the EU-civil society relationship significantly alters the dynamics. A representative of the CFCU summarised this change in an interview, as he said, “we need to be more rigorous and more detailed in our work because we are looking after someone else's money”.<sup>72</sup> The CFCU is responsible for a broad array of financing, where NGO funding constitutes only a small portion. Furthermore, the CFCU remains primarily accountable to the EU and to Turkish ministries to ensure that the money they are channelling is being spent in legitimate ways. Many of the NGO respondents were highly critical of the role of the CFCU in the funding process:

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<sup>71</sup> Interview with senior EU civil servant, EU Delegation for Turkey, Ankara, 03 April 2008. [B5]

<sup>72</sup> Interview with the director of CFCU, 27 June 2008. [B4]

They are a stupid organisation. They are stupid, stupid, stupid. All I do is write reports, fill in forms, work on the accounts. We have now waited six months since we finished our project for the final 20 per cent [€20,000] of the funds to come through. Before, in a different project, the EU Delegation sent the remaining money within 15 days once we had sent our report to them. [...] CFCU are really concerned about tax. They first want to make sure that we have paid all tax. Then they want to check that all those companies that we used in the project have also paid tax on the money they got.<sup>73</sup>

There are implications for NGOs that arise from this new division of labour and that constitute more than a simple bureaucratic initiative. The way in which the EU Delegation and the CFCU perceive their role within the funding process is very different, and does not amount to a simple shift of responsibilities from one entity to another. The CFCU is ultimately a governmental body and it has therefore governmental interests at heart. After all, only a small segment of the funds that flow through the CFCU concerns non-state actors, making NGOs a sideshow for the CFCU. A poignant example of this came during my research when visiting CFCU offices, which happened to be on a Friday. My meeting finished just in time to witness the mass exodus as virtually all CFCU staff made their way to Friday prayers. Anecdotally, several of the NGO respondents interpreted this type of behaviour as a sign of allegiance with the AKP, the moderate Islamic party in power. Visiting Friday prayers was much less popular before the AKP came to power. Whilst it may not be surprising that the political party in power employs like-minded individuals, this behaviour is also indicative of the priorities that inform CFCU decision-making. Despite operating in a capacity that is independent of the state, at the end of the day CFCU staff are state employees, whose future careers are in part determined by their political affiliations. The state, not the non-state, lies in their direct gaze.

From the point of view of the NGOs, the funding relationship is no longer seen as a partnership with mutual aims. Whilst this shift has been deemed a neutral, administrative operation by the CFCU and the EU Delegation, in fact this can have implications on the ability of NGOs to make use of their comparative advantage: to think outside the box and produce innovative, locally relevant projects. The process constrains them to conduct their work within the strict project criteria governed by

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<sup>73</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Ankara, 01 April 2008. [C15]



forms and reports. Whilst these are not new problems for NGOs in Turkey, the new structures have augmented the magnitude and extent of the difficulties.

The Civil Society Development Centre (CSDC): The CSDC is a central player in civil society funding. An independent NGO itself, it has established itself as the domestic hub to distribute EU funding in Turkey, as figure 3 indicates. In 2007-8, the CSDC has reportedly issued € 3.1 million in grants. Although the project themes still originate from within the EU, the CSDC has considerable discretion over who is being funded. The idea for the CSDC originates from a project funded by the EU delegation. In 2003, a team of Turkish civil society experts were funded by the EU Commission under a two-year Civil Society Development Programme with the aim of providing NGO training across Turkey. It was following the success of the programme that the team was encouraged by the EU delegation to form an association and to apply for grants. The purpose of the CSDC has been the following:

To be like an internal mechanism within civil society promoting its own development. They would be doing the work for themselves and we would only give them funding. We've given them considerable funding, actually.<sup>74</sup>

CSDC is kind of a semi-donor, the middle man between CFCU and NGOs that gets asked to find grantees. The grant programmes are devised using our past experience in the field that helps us understanding what the immediate needs of NGOs are. Ultimately, the CFCU will need to accept our suggestions before things move ahead.<sup>75</sup>

The CSDC aims to build the capacity of NGOs at the local level by identifying grantees and offering them support throughout the project cycle. The CSDC staff are Turkish civil society activist and experts, with locally relevant experience that aims to make the organisation more accessible to local NGOs. It is also an attempt to address the inequities of the application process for EU funding, which tends to favour the elite NGOs. The CSDC seems to respond to some of the criticisms that donor-funded programmes have faced, where they are seen as out of touch and imposing an external set of values onto local civil society (Ottaway and Carothers 2000). In comparison to these observations the CSDC is a constructive development.

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<sup>74</sup> Interview with a senior civil servant, EU Delegation to Turkey, Ankara, 03 April 2008. [B5]

<sup>75</sup> Interview with the director of the CSDC, Ankara, 07 August 2008. [B7]

Furthermore, given the origins of the CSDC, it is difficult to consider this entity to be truly an internal mechanism within civil society. The impetus to create the CSDC came from the encouragement within the EU family. The CSDC is not simply part of civil society, just another NGO, but an additional layer in the relationship between the EU and other NGOs. The CSDC offers support and capacity-building services to the NGOs it works with, but it does this in the context of EU-funded projects where the support is aimed at guiding the NGO successfully through the project cycle. In practice, therefore, the actions of the CSDC improve the efficiency of NGOs as vehicles for distributing EU funds and delivering projects. Does the CSDC, therefore, truly help civil society to internalise the new processes EU funding requires, or does it merely perpetuate the superficial nature of external funding?

Earlier in this chapter, as well as frequently throughout the thesis, the motivations for donor funding toward NGOs have been linked to ideas about democratisation and Europeanisation. In this regard civil society funding strategies tend to pay special attention to the strengthening of civil society through support for advocacy NGOs. In operationalising such aims, there seems to be more focus on the management of the funding process and creating channels through which financial assistance is distributed and NGOs made accountable. In Turkey's case this has been realised through intermediary organisations such as the CFCU and the CSDC. These developments are illustrative of how Europeanisation unfolds in practice but also point to a particular set of circumstances where the processes of change are potentially at odds with the agenda for democratisation. Funding for NGOs, despite best intentions by everyone concerned, is unlikely to lead to a more democratic society in any direct, measurable way. Governmental control of the finances for nongovernmental action may jeopardise the independence of NGOs. Similarly, the additional layers of management between the EU Delegation and NGOs are likely to increase the distance between the two sides, and compromise the active participation of the latter.

#### **6.4 NGO views on the funding process**

The above section laid out a scenario where the limited domestic opportunities encourage NGOs to look for external sources of funding. Access to external funding is facilitated by domestic organisations, the CFCU and the CSDC, which have been appointed by the EU to manage the funding process, and who exercise certain conditions on how the funds are accessed and managed. What kind of choices, then, do

advocacy NGOs make in practice and how do they rationalise their decisions? On the bases of interviews with representatives of advocacy NGOs, two determinants for their choices to either participate or not to participate in EU funding programmes are identified: the internal organisational capacity and what the NGO deems its source of legitimacy to be.

### *Participation in EU funding*

Focusing on NGO capacity at first, this is understood in terms of an ability to carry out activities effectively. From the donor perspective, this idea is strongly linked with the debate on capacity-building. As discussed in Chapter Three in particular, this can be understood as strengthening the NGO's role in providing services or supporting democratic processes by developing the organisational dimension of an NGO (Lewis 2001). From the perspective of Turkish NGOs, the funding they have received from the EU did not change what they did, but it enabled them to do it quicker, or to do more of it. Donor funding was positive because it improved their capacity to get this done:

Before, you could have projects if you paid from your own money. It was hard, really difficult. In the last ten years the funds have been really good in helping NGOs to really do something.<sup>76</sup>

There is a new environment where if you have an idea about something you want to change, you can find money and do something easier... When we first founded a women's centre [early 1990s], we collected the money for the psychologist's salary by selling second hand clothes at the market...but now it's different, the funds have become a chance to do something quickly, and to be more effective.<sup>77</sup>

External assistance is regarded as a short-cut to achieving aims that previously required a great deal of individual effort. Several examples of the kinds of activities such funding had enabled emerged during the interviews. The additional funds have translated to the creation and dissemination of informational pamphlets about the issues they work on; financial and logistical support for organising workshops or conferences; support for research projects and publication of research on topical issues

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Ankara, 14 April 2008. [C1]

<sup>77</sup> Interview with a women's rights activist, Ankara, 01 April 2008. [C14]

such as honour killings.<sup>78</sup> This is the first point in regard to NGO participation in EU-funded projects: project funding is deemed a shortcut to pursuing the already existing objectives of these NGOs.

In the second instance, the funding has also improved the organisational capacity of the NGOs, in the more traditional sense of capacity-building:

When we receive EU funding that allows us to hire staff, then we prioritise those women who have been doing voluntary work for us.<sup>79</sup>

Through EU projects we learnt about project management; we had a “learn by doing” approach to our work which helped us to learn a lot from the EU projects.<sup>80</sup>

We have to accept that these [EU funds] are the most sustainable funds available to us, and we will do what is required to be able to apply for them in the future also.<sup>81</sup>

The internal organisational dimension of NGOs has benefited from funding. This has happened through actions such as hiring staff from a volunteer base, thus avoiding a brain drain at the end of a project, and through the development of managerial and administrative skills during EU-funded projects. As a consequence, NGOs have become more professional in their activities. Arguably, the support received has made NGOs more viable as organisations.

Thirdly, the NGOs partaking in EU-funded projects described the existence of a positive feedback loop where participation in EU-funded projects improves NGO capacity to succeed with future funding applications. On the one hand this may be the result of increased organisational capacity. On the other hand, the NGOs described themselves as being part of an inner circle that was more likely to succeed with funding applications:

We find it easy to get funding. Because we have past experience [with EU-funded projects], which helps. The government knows us, the EU knows us – we have some really good contacts. We just do what is needed and we get the money.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> I received copies of such EU-funded reports on honour killings from no less than three different women’s NGOs during my fieldwork.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with a member of a women’s NGO, Istanbul, 06 April 2008. [C13]

<sup>80</sup> Interview with a member of a youth NGO, Ankara, 06 August 2007. [D2]

<sup>81</sup> Interview with a member of a women’s NGO, Ankara, 01 April 2008. [C15]

<sup>82</sup> Interview with a member of a youth NGO, Ankara, 06 August 2007. [D2]

Since receiving EU funds, we have increased our public exposure in newspapers, and as a consequence of this we have been able to increase our financial and voluntary support.<sup>83</sup>

In other words, EU support leads to developments outside the immediate terrain of project funding, offering benefits such as increased publicity that in turn helps NGOs to garner additional support. It is a virtuous cycle, where the first two forms of bolstered capacity – effectiveness and organisational strengthening – feed into this third effect. NGOs benefit both internally and externally in terms of publicity and public perceptions that make it more likely to attract more funding from other external sources. Thus the benefits to internal effectiveness motivate NGOs to apply for EU funding in the first instance. The actual experience of participating in funded projects can lead to further improvements, where the positive outcomes of funding both encourage and facilitate further applications for funding. For a group of NGOs, at least, the capacity gains have led to a choice to pursue EU project funding.

The second determinate of NGO participation in EU funding relates to perceptions of legitimacy. Legitimacy refers to the credibility of an organisation, based on perceived moral justifications for its social and political actions (Lewis 2001 p. 201). In this regard, the EU pre-accession process has been helpful in expanding the spectrum of social and political issues that are deemed legitimate for NGOs to engage in and criticise the actions of the state:

The EU has had an impact on creating more space for women and gender issues. “Gender” is now part of the EU application process and something we have to address in our applications.<sup>84</sup>

EU provides additional points to the agenda...there is additional leverage gained for these points thanks to EU.<sup>85</sup>

EU impact? To create new issues that we can take up in our advocacy work.<sup>86</sup>

As discussed in Chapter Four, in this way the EU can offer an external anchor upon which NGOs hinge their efforts (Tocci 2005). The EU sustains a strong rhetoric in

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<sup>83</sup> Interview with a member of a Women’s NGO, Istanbul, 06 April 2008. [C13]

<sup>84</sup> Interview with a member of a Women’s NGO, Diyarbakir, 01 July 2008. [C11]

<sup>85</sup> Interview with a member of a Women’s NGO, Istanbul, 16 August 2008. [C6]

<sup>86</sup> Interview with a member of an Islamic Women’s NGO, Ankara, 08 August 2007. [C4]

support of human rights and democratisation (as discussed in Chapter Three) and the EU interest in these areas has widened the scope of issues that are legitimate for NGOs to work on. Such issues have gained legitimacy as areas of genuine concern, and several NGOs working on issues of environmental rights, child rights and women's rights have begun to make their concerns heard at the national stage. Not only has EU involvement pushed such issues higher up the agenda, but by making the issue of rights an important one, the credibility of organisations working on these issues has also magnified. Both the issue of rights and the NGOs working on rights-based issues have gained credibility through EU involvement.

What is more, the publicity and air of professionalism generated by EU funding also leads to legitimacy gains. It builds an image of a successful organisation, a professional organisation dealing with genuine issues of concern. Receipt of EU funds becomes shorthand for a successful NGO, and by making NGOs household names, funding from the EU can increase legitimacy of the advocacy work in the eyes of the public. EU funding therefore creates a virtuous cycle – at least for some. EU support leads to gains of both legitimacy and capacity among the recipients, and is advantageous in future applications for funding. However, for other NGOs these two very same issues of legitimacy and capacity can become a criterion for exclusion from EU funding.

#### *Non-participation in EU funding*

Staying first with the issue of legitimacy, here the question is what an NGO perceives its source of legitimacy to be, and whether affiliation with the EU would undermine this. Consequently several advocacy NGOs consciously avoid donor funding, and use this as means to garner broader support for their cause. The following comments clarify the kind of reasoning that leads to such decisions:

We constantly face the question “who is funding you, who is behind you”. It is important that we can reply that our funds come from members and other supporters inside Turkey.<sup>87</sup>

We have received no funding from the EU, and we don't want to apply for such funding. Because we believe that we should enter the EU in

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<sup>87</sup> Interview with a member of youth NGO, Istanbul, 4 July 2008. [D4]

equal terms and nothing else [...] we prefer local funds and wish to avoid dependence on foreign funds.<sup>88</sup>

Independence is the precondition of being an NGO. External funds give you the label of being the back garden of another organisation.<sup>89</sup>

The decision not to apply for EU funding is part of the organisational mission and sends a message that resonates well with their constituency and the membership of the NGO. If the NGO were to receive money from abroad, this would undermine the justifications for its social and political actions. It would face the possibility that its message would no longer be taken seriously because the NGO would be deemed to be delivering a message on someone else's behalf. This is not a development that is unique to Turkey. In India for example, externally funded NGOs have received the label of agents of imperialism, and some NGOs, in order to gain popular legitimacy, openly distanced themselves from being referred to as NGOs (Jenkins 2007 p. 64-65, quoted in Howell 2010 p.139). This shadows the old saying "he who pays the piper calls the tune", alluding to an assumption that an NGO is forced to trade some of its independence in exchange for external assistance.

The decision to avoid external funding is also a reflection on sources of authority. NGOs that position themselves along nationalist or Kemalist political lines source their authority from nationalist/Kemalist political rhetoric, which is in part framed in scepticism over the EU agenda in Turkey. By publicly refusing EU funding NGOs are able to assert their authority as being on the forefront of the nationalist or secular agenda. Contrary to its intentions, EU funding thus provides a potential avenue for anti-EU sentiment to flare up, and offers here an example of how the impact of EU funding reaches beyond the realm of the project. This again highlights some of the uncertainty present in the EU efforts to achieve Europeanisation in Turkey.

Secondly, lack of organisational capacity leads NGOs to make the decision not to participate in the EU funding process. Here the exclusion is not necessarily by choice, but reflects a barrier between EU funding and NGO ability to manage the application and funding processes that surround the funding framework. In the interviews conducted for this research, some NGOs described the gap between their operations and EU funding as unbridgeable. As one respondent commented, "it's

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<sup>88</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Ankara, 03 April 2008. [C5]

<sup>89</sup> Interview with a member of a Muslim human rights NGO, Diyarbakir, 01 July 2008. [B2]

difficult to know enough about the funding process. There are only a few of us and we lack the knowledge.”<sup>90</sup> In a similar manner, other respondents felt that the demands of an EU-funded project were beyond the abilities of the NGO: “We think the EU projects are too technical, complicated and demanding for us. If we applied, we would have to find someone to carry out the project for us.”<sup>91</sup> These views are confirmed by another respondent who works closely with youth NGOs, supporting their activities:

The application process [for EU funding] is unbelievable, we no longer think the gains are worth the effort and bureaucracy, especially for inexperienced youth groups. We now advise youth groups not to apply for EU funding [...] Turks normally don't speak a second language, this becomes a barrier. This is especially difficult for youth organisations because many students only learn English once they come to university.<sup>92</sup>

Thus there are several issues surrounding the application process that lead to NGOs with less capacity deciding not to apply for EU funding. NGOs lack the human resources to cope with the additional work required to find out about opportunities. Second, there are the opportunity costs of conducting the work – the application process in itself is found to be too complex, bureaucratic and not worth the effort. The application process in most cases is in English, and this alone is a barrier for many NGOs, regardless of their capacity to conduct the work. Finally, as the quotation above suggests, EU projects have gained a reputation for being difficult to manage, and for some it is the anticipation of this workload that leads to the decision to avoid EU funding. These examples attest to the observation made earlier that donors prefer to work with organisations that are amenable to bureaucratisation and routinisation (Howell and Lind 2009).

There exist various ways that NGOs react to the availability of EU funding. Whilst some NGOs viewed external funding as something to aspire towards, other NGOs had made a conscious decision to completely avoid foreign funding. Reasons for this can be found in NGO perceptions of legitimacy and NGO capacity to apply and manage the projects to which funding is tied to. Despite what seems to be a distinct lack of domestically available funding for advocacy NGOs in Turkey, NGOs

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<sup>90</sup> Interview with a member of a youth NGO, Istanbul, 04 July 2008. [D4]

<sup>91</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO in Ankara, 08 August 2007. [C4]

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Dr. Yoruk Kurtaran from the Youth Studies Centre at Bilgi University, Istanbul, 03 July 2008 [D3]. The programme on Civil Society Dialogue has begun to address this language issue, making funding applications in Turkish more widely accepted and offering wider translation support to NGOs.



do not apply for funding for the sake of it. The way EU funding separates NGOs into participating and non-participating groups should be considered more carefully. These dynamics set the ball rolling in developing an elite of NGOs that have strong capacity for high impact work, whilst other NGOs are inadvertently pushed away from these funding opportunities. It is important to think more carefully who in civil society is reached by these funds, what kind of impact this is likely to have, and how these outcomes relate to the announced aims of EU funding. It appears that the way in which project funding is operationalised means that organisations that are bureaucratically obedient and able are preferred.

### *Funding through projects*

This section begins to unpack the way in which projects, the key mechanism for channelling funding, shape NGO behaviour (this discussion continues in more detail in Chapter Seven). EU funding to NGOs is distributed solely through projects. The centrality of the project in turn has changed the way NGOs think about their activities, shifting NGO priorities away from their beneficiaries, and shaping the inclusion and exclusion of NGOs in EU-funded projects.

The project approach to funding is highly complex and needs to be carefully deconstructed. Projects are packages of time-constrained activities within a fixed budget, where success and failure are regularly based on quantifiable cost-benefit analysis. Whilst projects can pinpoint money directly to an area where it is needed and ensure that activists with local knowledge are involved, the problem is that most projects are short-lived and often fail to sustain benefits beyond the life of a project. Projects also create dependence by creating a superficial funding environment, spawning groups that only exist because of available funding (Carothers 1999). Moreover, whilst projects are being carried out they often lack flexibility to adopt to a local reality. The monitoring of this work ties NGOs down to writing reports that are unable to convey the local situation. For each project, myriad NGOs apply – how do you pick the right NGO to work with? The tendency is to engage with those NGOs that speak English, particularly the development jargon, and know how to develop project proposals. The fact that all funding is made available through projects in itself acts as a selection criteria for NGOs. The short-termism of project funding also places limits on what kinds of outcomes can be expected.

For those NGOs that partake in projects, or aspire to do so, the experience has certainly shaped them. As one respondent observed, “projects are increasingly becoming the focus of NGO work. The focus is shifting from voluntary work to having to secure some funding before an idea is worth acting upon”.<sup>93</sup> In similar fashion another respondent opined, “the success of NGOs should be dependent on how well they can think ‘outside of the box’. But in reality, their success is measured by how many funds they win”.<sup>94</sup> Both of these comments allude to the same phenomenon. The ideas and actions of NGOs gravitate towards projects, and thus towards types of activities that the EU has decided to fund. These activities are chosen with a view of supporting the Europeanisation processes that form the basis of the EU accession negotiations. Although the passion that spurs NGOs to speak for a cause is still there, this is now moderated by a new model as to how NGO work ought to be conducted. The project cycle tends to emphasise the practical needs of running a project and pushes NGOs towards realising these needs. In the words of another respondent, “you don’t have time to go and implement the project in the field because all your time is taken up by the financial management of the project”.<sup>95</sup> The projects often offer significant amounts of money to NGOs, and the warning “you should not run before you can walk”<sup>96</sup> aptly describe the dangers of NGOs applying for projects that are not within their organisational capacity.

The way in which NGOs approach funding that is framed around projects has two key outcomes. On the one hand the projects become a measure of success for NGOs. The application process can be likened to an examination, the passing of which leads to a qualification of sorts. As one interviewee pointed out to me, the language used in this context also suggests this: NGOs “win” grant “competitions”.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, NGO activities are no longer developed organically based on local needs. Instead, the activities become synthetic, designed to meet project criteria. The project competitions are all based on similar ideas, requiring similar activities from the projects; there is no space for NGOs to think outside the box. By becoming the yardstick by which success is measured, projects bring about increased competition

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<sup>93</sup> Interview with a member of a youth foundation, Istanbul, 14 August 2008. [D8]

<sup>94</sup> Interview with a youth activist, Ankara, 06 August 2008. [D2]

<sup>95</sup> Interview with a member of a women’s NGO, Ankara, 01 April 2008. [C15]

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Interview with a women’s NGO activist, Istanbul, 06 April 2008. [C13]

among NGOs, potentially fuelling the essentialist nature of civil society activity in Turkey.

What is more, the project approach limits methods of communication between the EU and NGOs to the application process. The NGO communicates its vision of what kind of activities it would like to carry out in a project application, which is then either approved or disapproved by the officials responsible. The nature of the process does not lend itself to a dialogue where, for example, good project ideas that may not be a perfect fit with project criteria, or proposals which are underdeveloped in technical detail but conceptually innovative, are given a chance. A more interactive application process would allow such ideas to be developed, increasing the diversity and breadth of projects as well as helping to make them more locally relevant. In similar fashion, the communication which takes place between EU representatives and NGOs once a project has been approved displays a similar rigidity. Unfortunately, much of the dialogue is dominated by matters related to financial monitoring, conducted by a third party, the CFCU. In this context, project-based approaches to democratisation are rated in terms of financial efficiency and accountability. As long as a project has spent all the money allocated in an accountable fashion, and does so within an agreed time frame, it is hailed as a success. Perhaps it is too soon to expect such a well groomed relationships to have emerged, and with time the dialogue between EU and NGOs may improve. Yet, in the accession context the EU insulates itself from direct contact by working through third parties such as the CFCU, which perhaps makes such long-term results less likely to materialise.

This is not to say that donors such as the EU should not engage in project-based work. There are good reasons to do so and projects can bring about excellent results. But it is important to be more aware of their limitations and realise what constitutes a realistic expectation in terms of project outcomes. Projects are not a miracle that, when applied to NGOs, can bring about democratisation: the broader context matters. Other forms of support are required also, and on the front of democratisation, one crucial issue is the mindset of the public towards donating to local advocacy NGOs. Historically, the Turkish public has viewed the state as the only point of call for their grievances and this strong state tradition still prevails to a large extent. Nor is this helped by the generally dismissive attitude the by Turkish state towards the work carried out by advocacy NGOs.

## 6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has sketched an overview of the funding processes, in relation to both domestic sources and those made available by the EU. The landscape of domestic funding suggests that advocacy NGOs are drawn to external sources of funding, as support for advocacy NGOs is not yet part of the philanthropic culture in Turkey and therefore domestic sources of philanthropy are channelled in a different direction for the benefit of religious charitable activity and individuals in need. As the accession negotiations begun, the EU-NGO relationship in Turkey changed also. Civil society was no longer the key partner for the EU in Turkey, as this role has been taken over by the government. A third party, the CFCU has taken on the task of managing and monitoring the funding process on behalf of the EU Turkey office. These changes have made the process more formal and bureaucratic, focused increasingly on quantifiable end results and on ensuring that funds have been spent in accountable ways. This diverts attention away from the outcome and impact of the funded projects, as they unfold on the ground.

It is important to recognise that among those NGOs that aspire to receive EU funding, at least two groups have emerged. One group has been motivated to internalise the opportunities that have come available. These organisations have gained new skills of project management and learnt how to successfully apply for funding also in the future. The other groups have remained outside of these opportunities, either through a conscious policy of resistance or because project funding does not suit the NGO's circumstances. EU funding policies are effectively shaping a particular sector of NGOs; given that certain start-up capacity is required to engage in the funding processes, these groups are more likely to be urban, middle class professional NGOs or think-tanks that already possess a competitive advantage in carrying out projects. Thus a two-tier system of "have and have-nots" (or "want and want-nots" as the case is with those groups that refuse engagement) is gradually established with a core of organisations that are able to deliver projects in a professionalised, bureaucratised manner. Their actions increasingly resemble the actions of a third sector. Thus, the NGOs that participate in EU funding are likely to become involved in the Europeanisation processes that have begun in earnest with the start of the pre-accession process.

These observations raise the question how achievable the objectives behind EU funding are. If the overall objective relates to the development of a vibrant civil

society, democratisation and Europeanisation, as the project documents purport, in what way are these to be achieved by the projects that are funded? One aspect to consider is the possibility that projects are re-moulding the way in which NGOs think about their activities. What activities are deemed important, and once engaged, what aspects of these activities are prioritised. Here the answer seem to be that activities selected by the EU to be part of their funding framework are deemed important, and the financial aspect of the project (how money has been spent) is prioritised over qualitative outcomes (how did project beneficiaries feel about their participation and what the long-term implications may be). Since NGO motivations for engaging in funded activities are not necessarily rooted in organisational aims, but in what kind of funding is on offer, it is plausible, although difficult to prove empirically, that NGOs would operate somewhat differently were there no project funding available. Arguably, there is a gap between what projects expect NGOs to do, and how NGOs would naturally operate. How NGOs find ways of reconciling this gap is the focus of the next chapter.

## 7 Tracing the impact of EU policy on the ground

This final empirical chapter explains how NGOs navigate through the conflicting interests that arise from the incongruence between policy conceptualisation and how NGOs operate in practice. The chapter begins with a discussion of the project approach to development, its benefits and shortcomings, and places the actor-oriented perspective (Long 2001) against the model of rational decision-making that dominates the project-based approach. The actor-oriented perspective has explanatory power because it highlights the complex social processes that inform NGO behaviour in the project environment. Next, to illustrate the agency of Turkish NGOs in the EU project funding context, the chapter draws on the work Lewis and Mosse (2006) who describe NGOs as “brokers” and “translators”. In order to account for the types of roles NGOs have assumed the Turkish context, two additional roles are conceptualised: “navigators” and “antagonists”. Once this framework for thinking about NGO roles from an actor-oriented perspective has been established, the chapter moves to describing these roles in more detail. Firstly, the role of the Central Finance and Contracts Unit (CFCU) as the representative and executor of EU project policy is explored. The aim here is to illustrate the rational decision-making model that governs the technical management of EU-funded civil society projects. Secondly, the roles NGOs assume as “translators”, “brokers”, “navigators” and “antagonists” is surveyed more closely. NGOs, therefore, are not mere passive recipients of project funding. Instead, NGOs react to projects in locally relevant ways, and find ways to negotiate through the funding process in ways that delivers a more favourable (and unanticipated) result for them.

In 1936, the eminent American sociologist Robert K. Merton wrote an essay where he described the “unanticipated consequences of purposive social action” (Merton 1936). When looking at the evolution of the relationship between the EU and Turkish civil society, many of his insights still ring true. For any social action, there is always a range of consequences, he argued, “any one of which may follow the act in any given case” (p. 899). Social action therefore implies irrationality of human action, whereby the outcomes of peoples actions will remain uncertain. Thus, the complexity of the social interaction that follows any social action mean that “its consequences are

not restricted to the specific area in which they were initially intended to center” (p. 903). The theme of this chapter takes its cue from Merton’s idea, as it argues that there are multiple factors that coincide in any social process, which make it impossible to anticipate the outcomes of social action.

One particular way this inability to anticipate the consequences of social action manifests itself in the context of EU-NGO relations is in the multiplicity of ways NGOs respond to the availability of civil society funding. Thus, whilst on the one hand social processes are inherently unpredictable, as Merton has shown, on the other hand it is also possible that actors consciously manipulate the processes for the attainment of their particular ends. In either case, the end result from the point of view of policy planning is the same: the outcomes of the policy processes are uncertain. Paraphrasing Merton, the theme of the chapter could therefore be summed as “the unanticipated consequences of EU project finance for NGOs in Turkey”. In other words, whilst recognising the complexity of social interactions and the gap that exists between EU policy and Turkish reality, how are NGOs reacting when faced with choices regarding engagement with EU policy?

In the context of the “development project” the chapter discusses both rational and actor-oriented approaches to understanding how projects unfold. This comparison resembles the one introduced previously between rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism and is an explicit attempt to draw parallels and bring together the theoretical discussions that take place within two different disciplinary perspectives, Development Studies and European Studies. The project is identified as a critical juncture where the unanticipated consequences of EU civil society policies in Turkey are located. Projects – particularly the procedures that surround the management of projects – are conceived in ways that prioritise the rational and scientific assumptions about what projects are meant to achieve, and how their success in achieving these goals are best measured. Projects, however, do not take place in a rational vacuum, but are rooted in the local social context. From this local context emerge diverse ways for local actors to relate to projects. It is therefore important to focus on the interaction between local NGOs and the EU in order to understand what kind of unanticipated consequences EU project finance can generate and as such the findings of this chapter also relate to the broader discussion of how Europeanisation unfolds in the Turkish context.

## 7.1 Projects and rational problem solving

In development work, projects are rarely regarded as particularly effective tools for altering human behaviour. They have often been criticised for imposing a linear and technical way of thinking, drawing a straight line between a problem and the policy designed to address it (Ferguson 1990; Fowler 1997; Mosse 2004). Yet projects have remained the dominant force for engaging NGOs in donor-funded programmes (Tvedt 1998). Arguably, the emphasis on projects has receded in recent years, as donors have become increasingly aware of the need to coordinate their funding efforts. In 2005 the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness<sup>98</sup> aimed to improve the harmonisation of aid objectives and delivery procedures, all in an effort to improve aid effectiveness (Foresti et al. 2006; DFID 2009). Whilst donor emphasis has shifted from discrete projects towards broader programmes, within these programmes projects still remain the primary mode of channelling funding to local actors, such as NGOs. This is certainly the case with EU funding in Turkey. The intervention offered by the project is a pre-planned set of actions with anticipated outcomes, which does not correspond to the reality of NGO work on the ground. Instead, we should see the project as part of an ongoing process, whose success is dependent on the broader context in which the actors engaged in the project operate.

Donors tend to see projects as an integral part of a rational method for finding a way to implement a given policy agenda that keeps the chains of causality short. The logical sequence of activities – setting the policy agenda, identifying the problem on the basis of this agenda, designing a policy intervention that is aimed at dealing with the problem, implementing the policy, and evaluating its success – surrounding the project has its advantages as far as fund-disbursing mechanisms go (Long 2001). It allows donors to embed accountability measures in their funding programs, which is an important aspect of EU funding given that the financial resources for the project originate from the EU taxpayer. Projects have pre-defined objectives that NGOs promise to fulfil, time constraints by which NGOs promise to abide and detailed budget frames that specify how the grant money can be spent along with quantifiable outcomes against which success is measured. It would be unrealistic to expect these conditions not to exist. For the NGOs, these requirements offer a concrete way to demonstrate success and at the same time donor expectations are made transparent.

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<sup>98</sup> Section 7.3 discusses the Paris Declaration in more detail.



Projects remain attractive because they simplify the complex process of social change into bite-sized chunks that are more easily managed (Fowler 1997). From a donor's point of view, it is this perceived simplicity and rationality that make projects an attractive option to fund.

However, the logical sequence of activities discussed above does not always match up with the logic of activities on the ground. A key issue in donor policy is precisely the fact that the policymaking agenda is established prior to problem identification (Chapter Six shows how the EU adopts this approach in Turkey). This order of events means that the policy agenda – such as the agenda for democratisation or the agenda behind civil society dialogue, both of which were discussed in Chapter Three – acts as a filter to the possible ways in which the problem is going to be conceptualised or understood. Agenda-setting thus becomes a critical point in the process because the chosen agenda influences all subsequent decisions regarding policy preferences, even where it differs from the ground-level issues it aims to address (Lukes 1974). Lack of congruence between the broad agenda and the issues on the ground means, in this case, that there is likely to be a gap between EU policy and NGO reality.

The rational approach to projects favoured by donors is based on certain assumptions about the nature of planned interventions that need to be dissected. The project is assumed to form a discrete set of activities that sets aside a time and space “bubble” where the intervention is supposed to take place. In other words, it is isolated from “the continuous flow of social life and ongoing relations that evolve between the various social actors” (Long 2001 p. 32). Interventions that aim to alter human behaviour need to appreciate that the existing behaviour is a product of a long chain of events, whilst an inability to do so will mean that the project cannot engage with the historical and social context it is trying to change. Given the logical-rational mindset behind projects, they tend to have an innate focus on formal structures and organisations, making it difficult for these issues to be considered. The informal rules and practices that shape the context in which a project takes place get sidelined (de Zeeuw 2005 p. 500). NGOs that adopt a narrow project focus can become vehicles pursuing donor agendas that lack relevance to what is needed (Eade 2007). Having been developed by donors, projects are also more likely to reflect donor interests. We can then surmise that success is likely to be determined on the grounds of how closely projects resemble donor policy models (Mosse 2005).

The actor-oriented approach has been developed on the basis of such a critique, moving away from emphasis on structural and rational strategies and, instead, considering the relationship between policy and practice as “a messy free-for-all in which processes are often uncontrollable and results uncertain” (Lewis and Mosse 2006 p. 9). In the context of development projects, the actor-oriented approach endeavours to develop a conceptual framework that is more attentive to the contextual nuances and offers a useful starting point for considering the uncertainty of outcomes. Key principles of the approach can be summarised as follows:

Social life is heterogeneous. It comprises a wide diversity of social forms and cultural repertoires, even under seemingly homogeneous circumstances.

It is necessary to study how such differences are produced, reproduced, consolidated and transformed, and to identify the social processes involved, not merely the structural outcomes.

In order to examine these interrelations it is useful to work with the concept of ‘social interface’ which explores how discrepancies of social interest, cultural interpretation, knowledge and power are mediated and perpetuated or transformed at critical points of linkage or confrontation.

Thus the major challenge is to delineate the contours and contents of diverse social forms, explain their genesis and trace out their implications for strategic action and modes of consciousness. That is, we need to understand how these forms take shape under specific conditions and in relation to past configurations, with a view to examining their viability, self-generating capacities and wider ramifications

(Long 2001 pp. 49-50)

Social interface is a key concept within the actor-oriented approach, looking at the points of linkage where external factors become internalised by local actors. It is useful here because it offers a method of entering the black-box of what actually happens when policy gets implemented through a project (projects being one such point of linkage) (Latour 1999). A key part of an analysis based on the actor-oriented perspective is to understand the interaction between the various actors, to show how the interest groups, through negotiation, interpret the processes surrounding a planned intervention differently (Long 2001 p. 72). This style of inquiry puts us on a track that asks us to pay attention to the diversity, discrepancies and uncertainty that are present in development interventions.

The approach, however, has been critiqued for being too focused on formal interaction and negotiation between the external and local actors. It places the spotlight on understanding the strategies actors adopt without taking into consideration the impact of the broader context in which actors operate. The focus on points of linkage – on the formal interactions and negotiations – places unnecessary limits on how we should understand the way in which local actors operate. The “structural-functionalist strait-jacket” is replaced by a different one (Gledhill 1994 p. 134). The actor-oriented approach has made an important contribution by communicating a persuasive critique of the structural-rational approach to development, and is, therefore, an invaluable stepping-stone towards a more sociologically oriented understanding of donor-funded projects. Yet, there are strategies and methods of acting that are not explained by what takes place in the social interface, where it is necessary to look at the broader issues of power and structure. As Lewis and Mosse insightfully observe “it is the appearance of congruence between problems and interventions, the coherence of policy logic, and the authority of expertise that is really surprising and requires explanation” (Lewis and Mosse 2006).

It is in this vein that Lewis and Mosse introduce the ideas of “brokerage” and “translation” as concepts that complement the work initiated by the actor-oriented methods. This aimed to push the analysis further, to consider both the agency of the actors involved as well as the influence of existing power structures on these actors. It is therefore not merely a case of looking at how external factors are internalised, but also how this works the other way around – how internal factors may become externalised.

## **7.2 Brokers, translators, navigators and antagonists**

Conceptualising NGO roles through these four lenses enables one to demonstrate the agency NGOs have as actors within the project framework. It is not a top-down relationship, where NGOs participate in projects as mere vehicles implementing policies conceived by donors. The NGOs respond in various ways to the opportunities and challenges a project brings to them. Secondly, this approach considers NGOs as products of the socio-cultural context where they operate, creations of the broader structures within which they exist. Brokers, translators, navigators and antagonists function in the intermediary terrain between the funders and the local fund

beneficiaries, internalising the system of funding and making it meaningful in the local context.

The concept of translation emphasises the dynamic nature of the social world, where the meaning of ideas is constantly re-shaped, transformed and translated (Latour 2005). The notion of translation therefore problematises policy, seeing it as a continuous process of transformation and translation (Lendvai and Stubbs 2009). The acceptance of new (policy) ideas is not solely dependent on the initial influence of agenda setting. Instead, the system is dependent on the willingness of others to take up the idea and transfer it further (Latour 1986). Translators, then, reinterpret the original idea and its meaning on the basis of their own interests and understandings. Viewing civil society actors as translators offers a useful lens through which to reflect more deeply on the donor-NGO relationship. The purpose of adopting this point of view is to move beyond the functions NGOs have inside existing funding frameworks and to understand how projects in reality create new and translated forms of behaviour. In other words, translation explores one particular way in which Europeanisation unfolds on the ground and resonates strongly with the sociological institutionalist approach.

It is indeed important to consider these issues in the context of the broader processes of policymaking of which EU funding to civil society is a part. The notion of translation offers a persuasive critique of policy transfer literature, and in particular of the Europeanisation literature that sees European integration as a rational and linear process (Lendvai and Stubbs 2009). In a classic model of European integration “goodness of fit” is regarded as the starting point for a process of domestic structural change that leads to an improved fit, thus achieving greater integration (Risse et al. 2001). Furthermore, this point of view connects with the rational project approach that has been adopted in the funding programmes that support these change processes. In their raw form, the interests championed by Turkish NGOs may be contradictory to the aims of EU civil society funding. Conceptualising the acts of NGOs as translation highlights the process of finding a way of reconciling their various contradictory interests with the aims of donor-funded projects. These actions bridge the potential disconnect between policy documents that prescribe solutions and the reality on the ground. Lewis and Mosse offer three examples of the types of tools NGOs make use of in translating interests: research, workshops and reports (2006 p. 164). In addition, examples in this chapter illustrate how projects and project implementation offer more space for translation to take place.

Viewing NGOs as brokers offers an insight to how actors find a way to make the system work for them. “Brokerage” can be understood to mean “social actors situated at the interface of two socio-cultural universes, and endowed with the capacity to establish links among themselves, be they symbolic, economic, material or political” (Sardan 1999 p. 37). These “intermediaries” (Lendvai and Stubbs 2009) connect and facilitate the relationships between the actors that come together in the funded project interface. They are “entrepreneurial agents” (Lewis and Mosse 2006 p. 13) who carve out a role for themselves from within the processes that surround project funding. Viewing these actors as brokers locates their role in the broader cultural and political context. Broker does not refer to a new role generated purely out of the opportunities made available by project funding. Instead, they make use of already existing entrepreneurial instincts that have been developed as a survival mechanism in a context where weak state and weak institutions leave actors unable to depend on formal processes. In the case of Turkey, the logic of brokerage operates through a reinterpretation of existing practices in ways that suit the new possibilities brought about by the presence of the EU. The concepts of brokers and translators help us to delve deeper into the ways in which Turkish NGOs operate in the mid-terrain between local realities and the policy environment created by EU funding.

Explaining NGO behaviour in the Turkish context requires two additional categories to fully account for NGO actions – navigators and antagonists. Brokering and translation focus on actions of NGOs as intermediaries that are positioned in between two sets of actors and find ways to reconcile the divergent views between them. The roles as navigators and antagonists approach the issue from a different angle, focusing on the strategies that help NGOs reconcile their own work with donor demands. Navigators identify innovative ways to narrow the gap between the current portfolio of skills they can offer and what is required by successful applications for EU projects. Antagonists’ roles are marked by their refusal to engage. The EU-NGO relationship is therefore not only marked by possibilities for reinterpretation and choice – as outlined by the first three roles – but also by normative disagreements that make working together difficult. Yet these kinds of responses are not wholly negative for the NGOs. The decision not to engage is not a simple case of disagreement but remains a positive or generative act for the NGO, as NGOs that employ such strategies find them beneficial.

### 7.3 EU funding for projects in Turkey

The development project can be likened to a complex machine. When the machine works efficiently, the internal complexity of the machine is not of concern (Latour 1999). Similarly, in rating the success of a development project the focus has remained more on the quantifiable, often meaning financial, inputs and outputs of projects. The bureaucratic accountability for how money has been spent has become the priority focus for assessment. Arguably, the actual mechanics of the processes that lead to success remain “opaque and obscure” (Lewis and Mosse 2006 p. 15).

Recent efforts by the donor community to reform the global structures for providing aid have reinforced the mechanisms for focusing on pre-defined outcomes and bureaucratic accountability mechanisms. The “Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness” is a case in point. Adopted in March 2005 and reiterated by the “Accra Agenda for Action” in 2008, the declaration set forth five broad principles. The first three – ownership, alignment and harmonisation – called for recipient countries to be able to decide on the content of the aid agenda, alignment of national development strategies with aid programmes, and coordination of donor efforts that avoids duplication in the demands donors make on local governments. The last two – managing for results and mutual accountability – ask for aid to be managed in ways that focus on desired results, as well as in ways that ensure donors and recipient countries are mutually accountable to each other for the results of aid (Foresti et al. 2006; DFID 2009; OECD 2008). The impact of the latter two principles in particular is felt directly at the level of NGOs, expressed through the emphasis within development projects on results-orientation and on accountability through bureaucratic measures. Developments in a similar direction are also visible in the Turkish context.

The EU pre-accession process introduced a new layer of management in the NGO enterprise. The bureaucrats working in the CFCU are the “engineers” that look after Latour’s metaphorical machine, and embrace a role that focuses on project inputs and outputs. The CFCU acts as the middleman between EU institutions and Turkish NGOs. It was set up as part of the EU pre-accession process to oversee all of EU financial support towards Turkey’s accession process and remains the organisation that is at the heart of project funding, tasked with tendering, evaluating, contracting, accounting, payments and reporting. In other words, the CFCU is responsible for overseeing the completion of the entire project cycle (CFCU 2009). Given its role as a

middleman, it is important to pay attention to the apparent disconnect that exists between how the CFCU and NGOs operate.

One of the key concerns for the CFCU is accountability.<sup>99</sup> It is essentially a Turkish organisation that has been given responsibility to look after EU money, and for this reason the CFCU takes its role as an accountant very seriously. Interviews with CFCU staff also highlighted the rigorous guidelines that govern what the CFCU can and cannot do:

Accountability is a big issue for us. We do our work for the EU Delegation. This brings to us additional needs to scrutinise more. We need to be more rigorous and more detailed because we look after someone else's money.<sup>100</sup>

The guidelines require, for example, that all projects tendered with a value of €10,000 or more are accompanied by a logical framework and concept note documents. The budgets that come with project proposals have specific rules about how the grant money should be allocated under the different areas of the project, such as human resource costs and administrative costs. During ongoing projects, the CFCU holds frequent meetings with the NGOs involved, to ensure that accounts are kept in good order and agree to release money for the next phase of the project only once the accounts for the previous phase have been checked and approved. The CFCU speaks highly of much improved “commitment ratios” for NGOs. This term refers to the percentage of the total funding made available by the EU that is successfully invested in projects. The CFCU puts this improvement down to a change in policy: projects that fail to live up to budget requirements are no longer failed at the outset, but offered assistance by the CFCU in order to balance their budgets according to the rules. The CFCU is also required to report biannually to the European Commission on its activities. It is these accountability processes that take centre stage in the role the CFCU assumes in its relationship with NGOs. Such issues dominate daily project management. As long as the project unfolds as the project proposal anticipated, in accordance with the proposed logical framework and the financial spending plan, it is expected to make a positive contribution and regarded as a success. The concerns for

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<sup>99</sup> The information in this section is based on interviews conducted with two representatives of the CFCU in Ankara, 26 June 2008 and 27 June 2008. [B3 and B4]

<sup>100</sup> Interview with a representative of the CFCU, Ankara, 25 June 2008. [B3]

accountability point upwards, toward the EU, leaving NGOs to battle with requirements that have little practical resonance with how they operate.

NGOs make up only a small part of the CFCU's mandate. In fact, a majority of the CFCU work involves overseeing the financial contracts of EU funding to ministries and other public bodies, and the work done with NGOs follows similar guidelines for accounting and reporting. The procedures do not allow flexibility for the fact that many NGOs are often run on a volunteer basis, with staff that work part-time and lack the capacity to deal effectively with the accounting aspect of project management. The NGOs find it therefore very demanding to comply with the requirements and feel that the way in which the CFCU operates reflects an unawareness of the way in which NGOs carry out their work, and as a result the CFCU engagement hinders rather than helps the NGOs.

There were of course similar measures in place before the CFCU became operational, but the official start of the accession process and the creation of the CFCU has further formalised and bureaucratised the operationalisation of NGO funding. Returning to the idea of projects as an interface, a linkage between two lifeworlds (Long 2001), the introduction of the CFCU into the relationship has made the linkage between the logic of EU funding and NGO work increasingly tenuous. The attitudes and interests that come face-to-face in the project interface are more incongruent. The widening gap in turn augments the space for interpretation through various forms of brokerage and translation. The next section peers inside the "black box of the project" in order to better understand the choices that NGOs make and the strategies they adapt when faced with the idea of EU project funding.

#### **7.4 NGOs at the project interface**

The aforementioned bureaucratic demands related to NGO project management solicit a variety of reactions from Turkish civil society actors. The concern with measurable outcomes that dominate the EU funding agenda is something NGOs view, and therefore react to, in a variety of ways. They either embrace this agenda, manipulate it to their own advantage, or deem it as a method of control that needs to be resisted, or even actively undermined. As they do so, these organisations embrace, appropriate or reject the project mentality that EU funding introduces. These reactions arise from the fact that there is a disconnect, a gap, in the social interface that projects constitute. Out of this disconnect arise opportunities for local actors to generate new ways of



conducting their work, new ways of bridging the discrepancies that exist between the EU policy logic and what actually happens. It allows one to widen the scope of study beyond the linear relationship between inputs and outputs of a project and to appreciate the much broader range of outcomes that need to be considered and how these come about. The disconnect also leads to questions over the appropriateness of project-based support as a means of bringing about change. In Turkey's case, projects are more concerned with the bureaucratic needs of the accession process than with the needs of civil society. Next, these issues are addressed by looking at the roles NGOs take as translators, brokers, navigators and antagonists.

### *NGOs as translators*

The characteristics of a translator are crystallised in the operations of the Civil Society Development Centre (CSDC). Its role has rather literally been to translate the EU-driven ideas about civil society funding to suit Turkish reality. As Chapter Six already described in some detail, the centre itself was initially set up as an EU project. The original motivation in setting up the CSDC was to build a halfway house between local NGOs and the European Union funding programmes. To this end the centre has run its own project application programme and been responsible for selecting which projects it wishes to fund. Staffed by Turkish civil society activists with long experience of working in the field, the CSDC offers advice and support on project management and, in so doing, opens the door for less capable NGOs to access funding. Through its operations the CSDC works towards a locally relevant vision of the EU funding agenda. The centre has embraced the way in which the EU operationalises its civil society funding, whilst at the same time working to reinterpret the purpose of its activities and role so that it fits in better with local needs. It is a prime example of a local actor as translator, an organisation that has taken up the ideas and actions introduced by EU funding and then renegotiated these further so as to effort to reshape their meaning in a way that is more contextually relevant.

The outcomes of the first two CSDC Advisory Board meetings, held in September 2005 and April 2006, offer an insight to how such reinterpretation takes place. The meetings were organised with a view to solicit opinions about the course that the CSDC was following. Over 80 NGOs participated in both meetings, and two documents outlining the outcomes have been published on the CSDC website (CSDC

2005, 2006).<sup>101</sup> In the first meeting, the agenda focused on the theme of “problems for NGOs in Turkey”. The second meeting focused on the activities the centre engages in (for example, training and other NGO support activities, such as grants) and how these could be improved. In terms of civil society development, these notes reveal a desire for civil society to find a more united, collective voice. The participants lament the fragmented relationships and communication that exist between NGOs, and the subsequent lack of common objectives and inability to speak with one voice. This is seen as a necessary development in order for civil society to become a more capable and influential voice in society. In brainstorming how the CSDC could contribute to resolving these issues the following suggestions were made by the participants: branching of CSDC, organising workshops that allow NGOs to come together, organising meetings around common agendas (such as EU-related issues), helping NGOs to establish a communication strategy, publishing a book on best practices for NGOs as well as a director-leader handbook, and providing training on internal communications and lobbying to help NGOs participate in relevant EU platforms.

The notes from the two meetings describe how local actors are interpreting local needs in ways that can realistically be addressed through the framework offered by EU civil society funding. The meetings were an exercise in matching the concerns of the local civil society actors with possible solutions from within the EU funding framework. This is evident from the style of approach, where the solutions that are proposed – expansion of CSDC, organising meetings or training sessions and development of publications – are all practices that are usually introduced by donor policy (there are today four regional branches of the CSDC). The meetings could therefore be described as translation exercises where local interests were reinterpreted to suit the EU-led agenda for civil society development.

How the Advisory Board conceptualised the problems and needs of Turkish civil society offers further evidence of translation. The problems were identified on the basis of a particular idea of what civil society means, an idea which resonates strongly with the European concept of civil society. For example, identifying the lack of a collective voice as a problem, and aspiring for civil society to gain greater influence by developing a united voice closely correlates with the liberal view of civil society promoted by the EU (and discussed in more detail in Chapters Two and Three). Lack

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<sup>101</sup> This analysis is based on the written minutes of the of the two meetings (CSDC 2005, 2006)

of volunteerism and local participation, as well as competition between NGOs, were among the other problems that also resonate with the Western ideas about civil society. Similarly, the very concept behind the CSDC originates from a similar understanding of civil society. It may be unreasonable to expect the members of the Advisory Board to engage in problematising the role of the CSDC as a civil society actor. Yet the fact that the CSDC is accepted as an idea by local actors suggests that an act of translation has already occurred.

These discussions and the indication they give of the broader role of the CSDC serve as a good example of how civil society actors in Turkey engage in reconciling EU ideas for civil society development with the Turkish reality. The CSDC thus plays a translating role as a middle man between EU efforts to fund civil society, and the NGOs on the ground that undertake the work through projects. It offers examples of how the policy design – training, workshops, publications and above all projects – through which donors operationalise their vision for civil society, is translated to better suit a local context. The actions here show that EU policy and reality of Turkish civil society do resonate with each other, and the processes of Europeanising Turkish civil society is also driven by an internal motivation. Given this role, the practices in which the CSDC engages as an organisation characterise the trend towards Europeanisation of Turkish civil society.

#### *NGOs as brokers*

In their engagement with project funding, Turkish NGOs have displayed an ability to create new roles for themselves and not simply follow the normative guidelines that the EU rules for civil society funding prescribe. These brokering roles are produced by the new situation in which NGOs find themselves as they respond to changing circumstances and hope to bridge the gap that exists between the organisation and access to EU funding. Such a point of view allows us to see the entrepreneurial character of NGOs and elaborates on the variety of possible responses through which civil society can shape the outcomes of EU involvement. This section outlines one of the unexpected ways in which NGOs have reacted to the increasing availability of project funding. In so doing, it suggests that the impact of EU funding is more wide-reaching and complex than anticipated, leading to uncertain and uncontrollable results.

In response to the rise of project funding, an industry of consultancies acting as brokers has also emerged. Some regard these as simply a support network that less capable NGOs can rely on, levelling the playing field:

[English] language is not a problem, project preparation is not a problem. There are consultancies that can help with these kinds of capacity issues.<sup>102</sup>

However, for others the existence of these organisations comes as an undesirable side-effect of the funding framework:

We have issued a warning [advertisement], to warn against consultancies that call themselves ‘CFCU accredited consultancy’. Such affiliations do not exist, it’s a misuse of CFCU’s name. The consultancies make them up in order to find NGOs that need help.<sup>103</sup>

These consultancies also bridge the gap between themselves and civil society by employing civil society experts in their ranks, making these organisations an interesting hybrid between a private company and an NGO, as far as their personnel goes:

We [EU Delegation] started to have many cases where consulting firms or private businesses were registered as non-profits, and in that case we were bound to accept them in our call for proposals. [...] I mean it was so strange because we also look at the proven track record of organisations on working in that field, I mean we don’t give funding to new companies that all of a sudden spring up. But they were able to recruit to their companies figures from civil society who had been committed to one particular field for so many years, and all of a sudden you look and see that this person is now in this company.<sup>104</sup>

These consultancies have had a significant impact on the way in which EU funding has unfolded in Turkey. The director of the CSDC had an encounter with a consultancy that is worth recalling here. He received a phone call enquiring about upcoming grant programmes for NGOs. As the caller was working for a consultancy, the director explained that only NGOs were eligible to apply. The caller said he knew this, and

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<sup>102</sup> Interview with Dr. Şentürk Uzun, the Head of the Department of Associations, Ankara, 08 August 2007.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Interview with a senior EU civil servant, EU Delegation in Turkey, Ankara, 03 April 2007. [B5]

their role was to design projects for NGOs – they had so far created 48 projects, four of which had been sent to the CSDC:

I checked our database, and saw that proposals they submitted before had been accepted. Twice. I looked in the computer, and saw the logical frameworks in these proposals were the same, they only changed the cover page! When I went to visit one of these NGOs, I asked “So you will soon start a project. What kind of preparations have you made?”. He said “oh, I don’t actually yet know what kind of project we are going to make. The consultancy made the application, we just said that we will cooperate with them.”<sup>105</sup>

The NGO had simply agreed to pay the consultancy a fee of ten per cent of the value of the award. The project budget has no such allocation available, yet the NGO thought they could find a way to spend the money in this way. Here we can observe two separate acts of mediation. One is the role played by the consultancy as a broker. It identifies the gap between the EU project culture and the local NGO culture and offers its services as a way to bridge this gap. The second is by the NGO that recognises its own lack of capacity to apply for EU funding yet is able to identify a path that will gain it access to EU funds. The consultancies perform a role as agents that use their instincts to reinterpret NGO practices to make best use of the new circumstances.

#### *NGOs as navigators*

The term “navigator” refers to the ability of NGOs to identify opportunities to access donor funds, utilising the funding process to their own ends and finding ways to make the funding framework work for them. Navigator NGOs display the same entrepreneurial spirit as broker NGOs, but aim it at different outcomes. Whilst brokers act as the go-betweens that bridge the donor reality with local reality, navigators use entrepreneurial skills to take advantage of the opportunities donor funding generates, and do so for their own ends. In this sense their actions are opportunistic – the NGOs find ways to navigate through the differences that exist between their current state of affairs and accessing funds. The observations made in this regard by the director of the CSDC resonate strongly with this interpretation:

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with the director of CSDC, Ankara, 07 August 2007. [B7]

The NGOs see the amount of the grant, and become fixated on this. They first put together a list of activities, then realise they have to create more activities to reach the amount of the grant. Then they discover a mission that fits these activities, and an appropriate main goal. So they approach this process the wrong way around.<sup>106</sup>

The behaviour described in the above quote is one example of how NGOs navigate the gap that exists between their operations and what is required by EU funding.

An Istanbul-based human rights organisation interviewed during fieldwork demonstrates how NGOs can make EU funding work for them. They have set up a separate association, used for their official work, such as applying for donor funding.<sup>107</sup> A friend of the director working for the EU delegation in Ankara suggested that the organisation apply for a grant. The application proposed to create a new “Centre for the Freedom of Expression”, and, given that the application was successful, €66,000 was spent on this project by the EU in a subsequent 12-month period. In their own publication, the EU delegation to Turkey referred to the project as an example of a successful project (European Commission 2007c). The way in which the director of the NGO described the effect of this project on the organisation was interesting, for he said there was no change in their daily operations:

We called it the Centre for the Freedom of Expression, but at the end of the day we continued doing the same work as before. There was no change.<sup>108</sup>

In order to convince the EU delegation to grant the funding, they had to describe the purpose of the funds as creating a new centre for human rights. This way the project had a concrete end result, which appealed to the funders. However, as far as the daily work of the NGO was concerned, nothing changed. The NGO had found a way to package their work so that it granted access to EU funding without compromising its own interests. Additionally, the director of the NGO cited a long list of other foreign donors from whom they had received money. Some years ago the director had visited the United States in order to receive an award from the Human Rights Watch. This trip had been most useful, he said because it opened new avenues for fundraising for them.

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Interview with a director a human rights NGO, Istanbul, 24 June 2008. [B1]

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

The actions exemplify how NGOs find ways to navigate a path towards a situation where it is able to benefit from NGO funding, even where its initial circumstances may not have been favourable for such an outcome, and identify new opportunities for funding. The daily activities of the NGO did not change but were rather re-packaged in the form of a new centre, demonstrating skills at reinterpreting their own work in ways that make it relevant to the funding agenda of donors.

A women's NGO in Diyarbakir that was established by the local municipality is another organisation that exhibits these entrepreneurial navigation skills. In the 1990s, vast numbers of internally displaced people from the southeast of Turkey<sup>109</sup> gravitated to Diyarbakir, and women previously accustomed to life in villages have faced difficulties in becoming economically productive in an urban environment. The NGO helps immigrant women to become economically active again.

We have lots of migrants in Diyarbakir, and their problems were becoming very visible. This is why our NGO was set up. We were set up by the Diyarbakir municipality. We were founded in 2001. Even though we are institutionally part of the municipality, we do have independence.<sup>110</sup>

In effect, the municipality has “branched out” by setting up a bespoke women's NGO. This NGO acts as the partner organisation in an EU-funded project aiming to integrate internally displaced people. In fact, one aim of the EU project is to bring together municipal and NGO actors in order to establish closer links between local government and civil society (these relationships were discussed in more detail in Chapter Five). It is the only partner NGO involved in the project. The funding supports the construction of a new complex where vocational training as well as support services for the disabled, women and children will be housed. The NGO acknowledges its close relationship with the municipality. This partnership is likely to remain in place for a relatively long time, for the NGO is cognizant of the problems of long-term funding and anticipates that the municipality will also be the source of future funding. This example again illustrates how local actors identify the gaps between their current

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<sup>109</sup> As a consequence of Turkish government policy in the Kurdish region, between 378,335 (official government figure) and 3 million (estimation by Turkish NGO, Human Rights Association) people have been forced to leave their homes (Çelik 2005). A vast majority of these people have congregated in Diyarbakir. [[http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/eng/tgyona\\_eng.shtml](http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/eng/tgyona_eng.shtml)]

<sup>110</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Diyarbakir, 02 July 2008. [C16]

method of operations and what is required in order to access EU funding. It is an example of how NGOs are able to carve out new roles for themselves, defining new limits for how EU funding can be approached.

Such “invented” NGOs could in fact form a separate, fifth category in this analysis. However, whilst inventing an NGO purely to gain access to project funding is admittedly a rather radical and unique solution, at the same time it can be regarded as another example of the ability of local actors to identify innovative ways through which to be offered funding, even when they should not qualify for it. For this reason invented NGOs remain here as an example of the entrepreneurial spirit that NGOs exhibit when they are looking for ways to access EU funding, justifying its categorisation as a subset of “navigators”. Nevertheless the implications of such invented NGOs warrant a brief discussion here. It raises questions about what exactly can be achieved with the help of external funding, and what we can extrapolate from the numerical strength of the NGO sector in terms of development of civil society as an active force in Turkish society and politics. This example certainly questions the link often made between NGO funding and democratisation, something that was explored in Chapter Three in relation to EU policy. Furthermore, we need to ask who the beneficiaries of such an NGO are and what position does such organisation hold in the local community? The assumptions underlining EU policy explored in Chapter Three expect NGOs to gain their legitimacy from the communities they represent, and this is also the logic behind the perceived democratising effect of NGOs. Yet, at the same time the invented NGO, given its close relationship with the municipality, may possess many of the administrative and bureaucratic skills relevant to completing EU projects that may be important to successfully achieve project outcomes.

#### *NGOs as antagonists*

When faced with the possibility of applying for EU project funding, some NGOs pursue an entirely different type of strategy. So far, the discussion has focused on ways in which NGOs engage in the processes that the EU has in place, either by embracing and translating, by brokering or by navigating the system so that it makes sense in the local context. In addition, it is also worth exploring the resistance that NGOs display towards the EU. This is a form of extreme brokering that is distinct from the forms discussed above in that the strategies are premised on disengagement with the EU.



Take for example one republican women's NGO interviewed in Ankara. This NGO takes a stance against EU funding. It does so on the basis that external funding poses a challenge to the independence of civil society. Institutions such as the EU have a particular agenda that they wish to implement in Turkey, and NGOs are being asked to help with the implementation. The funding is therefore viewed as not being neutral; there is deemed to be an agenda behind it that goes beyond merely funding and spills over into attempts to control NGO behaviour.

We have no funding from the EU, and we don't want to apply. We survive with members' contributions. We totally respect our friends who are using EU funds, but we don't accept funds because we believe there is a hidden agenda behind this.<sup>111</sup>

Politically the NGO can be described as conservatively secular, at least to the extent that it opposes the proposals to allow the wearing of the headscarf in universities and other public spaces, and the NGO participated actively in the demonstration in the spring of 2007 (these demonstrations were discussed in some detail in Chapter Four). This is not to say that they are not progressive, for the NGO was also at the forefront of pushing through the groundbreaking reforms regarding Turkish Penal and Civil Codes that described in Chapter Five. As the above quotation shows, the NGO respects all work done by NGOs that do receive foreign funding, and they can see the positive results, yet they themselves refuse foreign funding on the grounds that it comes with a hidden agenda. This attitude reinforces a broader set of issues that relate to scepticism and weariness towards the EU accession process. The refusal to accept EU funding contributes to the organisational identity of this NGO. The act of antagonism is therefore a generative act, it produces a positive outcome for the NGO. The resistance to EU funding is viewed as a source of integrity, as a visible sign of keeping true to the values they uphold as an organisation.

A Muslim human rights organisation takes a similar stance on the issue of foreign funding. There is no strict overarching policy for the whole organisation whereby EU funding is refused. The organisation consists of over 20 branches that are located all around Turkey, where each branch can take its own approach to the use of external funds. The branch interviewed in Diyarbakir had adopted a policy of not

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<sup>111</sup> Interview with a member of a women's NGO, Ankara, 03 April 2008. [C5]

applying or accepting any foreign funding. The reasons given for this decision were the following:

Independence, this is a precondition of being an NGO. Domestic funds from government or from other groups within the country give you the label of being the back garden of another organisation. This issue is taken very seriously in Turkey. In my own view, we should take the source of funding very seriously, but unless they intervene with the process apart from giving the money, then there is no problem. But this is not a majority view within our branch, and we don't accept outside funding.<sup>112</sup>

Accepting funds from outside would taint the reputation of the NGO, and politicise it in an undesirable way. Given its geopolitical location in the Kurdish heartland, the organisation felt it extremely important to display political neutrality in their work and to show that they were concerned with the issue of human rights only. Acceptance of EU funding would have allowed others to politicise their work and to argue that their work was not about defence of human rights but also about, for example, the politics of Kurdish and/or Muslim issues in Turkey. Hence, both organisations – the women's NGO from the previous example and the Muslim human rights NGO – reject funding because of political reasons, although the motivations to do so were very different. In the latter case the underlying strategic reason for refusing to apply for funding and for marketing itself as an organisation that is independent of the EU helps the NGO to construct an image of itself as a neutral, depoliticised organisation. In this regard, the antagonistic stance on EU funding is helpful.

Finally, a small GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual) organisation based in Istanbul expressed a similar, antagonistic strategy towards EU funding. The reasons for this were two-fold.<sup>113</sup> First, the NGO remained uncertain over how the government and the justice system viewed their activities. At the time of the interview, there was a widely publicised court case where an Istanbul municipality was trying to close down a GLBT NGO on the grounds that their actions were “against morality”. These accusations echoed a similar, unsuccessful court case that some years ago had been brought against another GLBT NGO based in Ankara. Given this unfortunate lack of clarity on the legality of their activities, they were hesitant to work on donor-funded projects. Additionally, the NGO was very clear that it did not want to become

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<sup>112</sup> Interview with a member of a human rights NGO, Diyarbakir, 01 July 2008. [B2]

<sup>113</sup> Interview with a member of a GLBT NGO, Istanbul, 07 April 2008. [A2]

an organisation that was purely focused on completing projects. This would contradict its status and identity as a grassroots organisation that was run on a volunteer basis. In effect the NGO was run by its members, for its members. Projects would divert attention away from these principles and towards external priorities introduced by the project. Where the NGO had a plan for some new work it wished to undertake, it would try to raise the necessary funds by organising a fundraising event, not by applying for external funds. As a volunteer for the NGO commented:

The thing is that we are a grassroots organisation. We don't want to become an organisation that is all about completing projects, and we try to avoid this as much as possible. [...] We don't want to depend financially on projects. [...] We don't want to think 'oh, there's an HIV project, let's do it!'.<sup>114</sup>

Resistance to EU funding is not absolute, for under the right circumstances they would consider EU funding, yet this represented a risk. There was a concern that projects would take over the agenda by requiring a shift away from the grassroots focus and from the ad-hoc way in which the NGO wanted to approach their work.

The antagonistic responses to EU funding can be found across a wide spectrum of NGOs. In various areas of civil society – from Kemalist and Islamist to GLBT NGOs, large and small – the antagonistic attitudes towards EU-funded projects surface in several different degrees of intensity. In each case, the antagonistic reaction offers something positive to the NGO. It can be a way of establishing a clearer sense of organisational purpose and objectives and help to bolster organisational identity by defining what the NGO is not. In this sense, this behaviour can be understood as protecting the independence of the NGO. For some, this antagonistic behaviour forms part of a broader suspicion and weariness towards the Europeanisation project in Turkey. For others, it is a way of reaffirming the reasons for the NGO's existence; it is focused on particular issues, and the lure of project funding must not direct away from these issues.

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<p><b>Translator:</b></p> <p>NGOs seek to find ways to reconcile the ideas behind donor funded projects in locally meaningful ways.</p> <p>They do so by reinterpreting the solutions offered by EU policy on the basis of their own interests and understanding.</p>	<p><b>Broker:</b></p> <p>NGOs act as entrepreneurial agents that facilitate links between donors and local actors.</p> <p>They do so by identifying the gaps that exist between EU projects and local NGOs and offering to bridge this gap.</p>
<p><b>Navigator:</b></p> <p>NGOs exhibit a similar entrepreneurial spirit as ‘brokers’ but utilise it in outcomes aimed at the NGO itself.</p> <p>They do so by identifying opportunities within the EU funding framework and finding innovative ways to gain access to this funding.</p>	<p><b>Antagonist:</b></p> <p>NGOs refuse to accept EU funding, or any other donor funding.</p> <p>They do so not only by avoiding EU funding, but doing so publicly in order to garner support from those who share their scepticism.</p>

**Table 5:** A summary of the four categories for NGO roles

It is challenging to offer an accurate assessment of the relative significance of each of these categories in the context of Turkish civil society and within the particular group of NGOs researched here. It is important to note that no NGO may fit perfectly – and solely – within one of the four roles described here. In other words, the same women’s NGO may at one time function as a broker between a rural women’s NGO and the EU, whilst behaving like a navigator at a later date. Having said this, at least among those NGOs that were interviewed as part of this research project, navigator-like behaviour was most prevalent. Even where NGOs did not admit to being navigators themselves, anecdotally almost every respondent referred to at least one example of another NGO that behaved in this way. This finding should not be surprising, considering the weak traditions of giving in Turkey discussed in Chapter Six, and the fact that NGOs are largely a recent phenomenon that have come to exist in an environment where external funding is a large motivating factor behind NGO activities. Additionally, the role of a translator or a broker requires a degree of specialist knowledge, which limits the number of NGOs able to carry out these roles.

## 7.5 Conclusion

This chapter argues that as NGOs make decisions about how to negotiate a path through the contradictions that exist between their daily practices and the requirements of the EU funding process, they generate new strategies that aim to reconcile the current position of the NGO with the prospect of funding opportunities. The strategies fall under two types. The first relates to the roles NGOs have as intermediaries, drawing on the model of NGOs as brokers and translators offered by David Lewis and David Mosse (2006). The second type focuses in on the direct relationship between NGOs and EU funding, explaining how NGOs position themselves in relation to the funding opportunities, as navigators and antagonists. Whilst some find ways to navigate closer to EU funds by reframing their activities in opportunistic ways that grant them access, other NGOs find it beneficial to position themselves sternly against external funding. These categories are not intended to be complete or exclusive but to offer direction in further analysing the domain of unanticipated consequences of EU funding.

The observations made in this chapter resonate strongly with the sociological institutionalist perspective to Europeanisation that was discussed in Chapter Two. Donors that fund project-based interventions tend to see projects through a rational lens, favouring them because they are time-bound, technical interventions that lend themselves to the development of quantifiable outcomes and performance indicators. The actor-oriented perspective questions the rational assumptions that drive the above conception, pointing, for example, to the complex social processes of internalisation that need to take place before projects become meaningful to local actors. It resonates with the sociological argument that places its focus on the local values and norms as key factors explaining local responses to externally derived goals. The rational and actor-oriented discussion of the project aims to add a layer of analysis to the theoretical approach developed in earlier in the thesis.

The strategies NGOs adopt may be in part based on rational calculations, but a crucial part of the equation hinges on the decisions NGOs make on the basis of their perception of the social context. The decisions NGOs make vis-à-vis EU funding are reflective of broader questions than simple utility-maximising calculus of rational choice institutionalism. The four NGO roles outlined in this chapter offer an insight into the processes through which EU policy becomes socialised, a brief look at the way

NGOs internalise the EU rules and norms in a variety of ways and how this process in turn leads EU policy to reach multiple outcomes rather than a single one.

The role of the CFCU reinforces the discrepancies between the donor world and the NGO world. Given the processes through which the CFCU assessed NGO performance, and the requirements that are placed on NGOs, it is likely that the two lifeworlds of EU funding and NGOs are likely to remain disconnected. It seems that this disconnect has only widened after the CFCU assumed its role at the centre of the EU-NGO funding relationship. This trend therefore suggests that the pre-accession process, by sustaining and widening the EU-NGO gap, creates further incentives and reasons for NGOs to engage in the roles of translators, brokers, navigators and antagonists.

The chapter demonstrates the multidimensionality of donor-NGO relations. Whilst actor-oriented networks highlight the inadvertent consequences of donor-funded projects, any analysis within the actor-oriented framework is tightly focused on the social interface that a project creates. By illustrating the various roles NGOs engage in, and particularly the various motivations that underlie these roles, the discussion has attempted to push beyond that which takes place around projects themselves and highlight the multidimensionality and unpredictability of the impact that EU funding can have on Turkish civil society. The impact of EU funding spills over from the contained project sphere, and points to the difficulties in predicting the outcome of donor policy. The unintended side-effects suggest that policy interventions, such as democracy promotion through NGO funding, cannot be thought of as simply executing a plan of action that has expected outcomes. To gain a better understanding of the true impact of EU pre-accession policy it is necessary to look more holistically at how NGOs engage with and react to EU policy, and how they embrace, adapt or resist this policy depending on their own interests.

The consequences of social action are rarely restricted to the specific policy area for which they were intended. We should remain wary of project aims that are based on a simple execution of a pre-defined plan with expected outcomes. The intermediary actors that operate at the junction where the donor world-view links up with the Turkish world-view are but one example of the myriad actors that contribute to the unexpected and nuanced outcomes of donor funding. This invites one to question whether the outcomes of EU-funded projects have actually been different from what was planned. The evidence from this chapter suggests that if the project

outcomes are premised on NGO projects reaching particular end results (as the evidence from Chapter Three suggests), then, given how the EU funding to civil society is unfolding, any specific outcomes are unlikely to materialise. Where the policy aspirations are not congruent with the NGOs' own goals, the organisations are skilled in finding ways in which to circumvent the aspirations donors have for NGO activities.

## **8 Conclusion**

The EU accession negotiations, by their very nature, crystallise around processes of change. These processes ask Turkey to accept a set of rules and norms that require wide-ranging internal adaptations, and which largely determine the official role that civil society funding plays in the accession context. In other words, the EU rationale for civil society funding links to a perception of NGOs as potential agents of domestic change. The research asked how EU policy on civil society expects NGOs to deliver change, and identified a conceptual frame for describing these expectations in democratisation and Europeanisation. The EU therefore anticipates that Turkish civil society can contribute to the accession process by further democratising and Europeanising Turkey.

The research reflected on the suitability of the EU policy approach in the Turkish context. It did so through a combination of a literature review, a policy document analysis, and a series of interviews with government, EU and NGO actors. Chapter Two first set out the normative logic behind EU policy, followed by a detailed discussion of EU civil society policy in Chapter Three. Chapter Four elaborated on the development of Turkish civil society and paved the way towards understanding how EU civil society policy may unfold in the Turkish context. The three empirical chapters that followed (Chapters Five, Six and Seven) were brought together by the common aim of wishing to understand how appropriate the EU policy approach has been. This aim was pursued by reflecting on the EU policy in the domestic political context of Turkey, and by charting the experiences of the actors involved in the policy process. The three areas under investigation were: the character of the relationships that advocacy NGOs are able to foster around them; how external civil society funding in Turkey corresponds with the actual needs of civil society and how funding shapes attitudes and responses among NGOs; and charting the varied and uncertain impact that EU projects have on Turkish NGOs. The findings suggested that the overall impact of EU funding extends beyond the scope of what is regarded as democratisation or Europeanisation, and the normative expectations of EU civil society policy. The research questioned the appropriateness of the EU approach in terms of the aims the



EU has set for its policy intervention, and the means through which the EU has set out to realise these aims.

This notion of appropriateness was also addressed by the research questions, with the main research question for this thesis asking “why, in the context of EU civil society funding in Turkey, are processes of Europeanisation unpredictable in their outcomes?” This was supported by sub-questions that helped to focus the research further: “what are the frameworks of support that are present in EU civil society assistance?”; “how does the Turkish political context mediate the impact of EU funding on NGOs?” and “how do NGOs react when faced with choices about how to engage with EU funding policy?” These questions pointed to a number of tools with which to investigate how EU policy, embedded in the ideas of democratisation and Europeanisation, plays out in the context of Turkish civil society.

### **8.1 Summarising the research findings**

Chapter Two established the theoretical foundation of the thesis, then outlined societal change as a central idea that has informed the way in which Western societies have come to understand the role and purpose of civil society. Thinkers such as Ferguson, Hegel and de Tocqueville strove to make sense of the new kinds of social relations that were presented to them by a modernising and industrialising world. The concept of civil society was interwoven with a changing society, with both the emergence of modern commercial relations and the evolution of modern state-society relations. Such ideas continue to inform thinking on civil society, with democratisation and sustainable economic development emerging as key motivations for engaging with civil society in Western donor circles, as well as within the EU. In the European policy lexicon in particular, the notion of a third sector brings together both the democratic and economic benefits of civil society and wraps the argument in the idea that civil society contributes to change and to a societal forward motion. The chapter found that the relevance of such concepts in the Turkish context is well worth reviewing because the third sector approach presents an overly positive and uniform view of the way civil society is likely to relate to change. Taking direction from the ideas of Hegel, who both spoke of the contestational and contingent nature of civil society, and from Gramsci, who referred to hegemonic and counterhegemonic struggles within civil society, the chapter argued that a more ambivalent view on the relationships between

civil society and change processes may well be prudent in the case of Turkey. Any overall picture of civil society activity is likely to be confused and multidirectional, reflecting the countless opinions and positions that various actors express, in turn alluding to the need for a contextually grounded understanding of civil society.

Chapter Three carried the discussion forward to the EU policy on civil society and explored how the aims of democratisation and Europeanisation become expressed in this policy. The chapter put forward two broad findings. First, a discursive shift away from democratisation and towards Europeanisation was identified. By 2003 the policy discussions on the role of civil society had become intricately linked with the process of EU enlargement and the accession process. EU policy has approached civil society not only as an element of liberal democracy with an essential role in the expression of human rights and citizenship, but also utilised it in a parallel discourse of what it takes for accession countries to become Europeanised more broadly. Second, the chapter suggested that the belief in the ability of civil society to contribute to the democratisation and Europeanisation processes depends on particular assumptions about NGO behaviour. One such assumption views NGOs from a *universal perspective*, whereby they are deemed to operate in similar ways in different contexts. Another assumption views NGOs from an *instrumental perspective*, seeing organisations as neutral vehicles to be used for the delivery of policies and to perform particular functions. Moreover, the chapter alluded to similar observations with regard to EU civil society policy both in the Mediterranean region and in Turkey, further confirming the instrumental and universal nature of EU policy. In the Mediterranean, EU policy has focused primarily on human rights and democracy. However, in Turkey since the start of the accession negotiations, there has been a more decisive shift away from policies that support civil society in direct democratisation efforts, towards softer and less confrontational policies of Europeanisation (adopting the *acquis communautaire* of the EU).

Chapter Four, the bridge to the empirical chapters that follow, provided the contextual flesh around the theoretical and policy discussions by considering the history and development of civil society in Turkey. The processes of Westernisation and modernisation that were set in motion in the 1920s and 1930s, together with aspirations for a modern, Western nation state, provided an important impetus for the present day processes of Europeanisation. On the one hand, Europeanisation has generated the context – an enabling environment – within which NGOs are able to

carry out their work. On the other hand, NGOs are an integral part of the Europeanisation process. The particular way in which Westernisation and modernisation turned out in Turkey also present limitations to the way in which Europeanisation can now unfold. The aspirations for reform, for example, are complicated by the domestic political context, where the secular and Islamic camps in particular are engaged in a hegemonic struggle over the political direction of the country. The essential nature of the debate that surrounds this issue, together with the fact that NGOs tend to take sides in this essentialist debate, contribute to the fragmented political discourse as well as to fragmentation within civil society. The policies that are part of the EU accession process become inevitably entangled in these debates, the chapter argued, complicating the processes of societal Europeanisation in particular.

Chapter Five, the first of the three empirical chapters, explored the impact of EU funding on the relationships that Turkish advocacy NGOs are able to establish with governmental actors as well as with other NGOs. NGO advocacy, being largely about aspirations for change, resonates strongly with the change processes related to EU accession. The impact of EU accession has been most profound at the level of legal changes that have significantly bolstered NGO efforts at advocacy. However, where the EU has financed projects aiming to improve relations between advocacy NGOs and municipal governments, these have had limited success, highlighting the need for such relationships to develop organically from within. Developing them with the help of external funding is unlikely to yield the results that were expected. Relationships between advocacy NGOs are often beleaguered by political or ideological debates and tensions, which get in the way of working together or focusing on the issues in a way that is productive and could contribute positively to the policy agenda. The chapter thus suggested that the Turkish context imposes limitations to the ability of NGOs to collaborate in ways that would be directly relevant to the effectiveness of government policy. This in turn has cast a question mark over EU policies that envisage such roles for NGOs.

Chapter Six queried the appropriateness of EU funding by looking at how appropriate it has been in relation to domestic avenues for funding and how it has shaped NGO responses to external funding. The domestic funding environment is rather unfavourable for advocacy NGOs, which tend not to be supported through domestic philanthropic endeavours. In this sense EU funding offers a good fit, as it has

tended to channel its support to those NGOs that would not otherwise have many domestic opportunities available to them. Since the start of the EU accession negotiations, the mechanics of the funding process have been Europeanised, introducing further bureaucratic complexity. Two domestic institutions, the Central Finance and Contracts Unit (CFCU) and the Civil Society Development Centre (CSDC) have effectively been tasked with moulding the funded NGOs into vehicles for delivering EU policy goals. Two issues internal to NGOs emerged as determinants of NGO participation in EU-funded projects. Firstly, NGOs felt that only those organisations with a certain internal organisational capacity were able to successfully bid for projects. Secondly, NGOs made decisions on whether to apply for EU funding on the basis of where the NGO perceived the legitimacy of their operations to come from. Some groups made explicit choices not to apply for funding, as they believe that EU funding labels them as less genuine or organic as a Turkish NGO. These inadvertent selection processes bifurcate civil society into “haves and have nots”, or the “want and want-nots”. The chapter concluded that these developments imposed limits as to how far-reaching and ambitious EU aims of building civil society through project funding can be.

Chapter Seven carried on the discussion with regard to the choices that NGOs make. The debate was harnessed by a focus on the notion of the “project”. The project interface through which EU funding is channelled to NGOs is not a closed box where actions can be controlled by the performance criteria assigned to the project. The chapter suggested that the incongruence between the policy expectations and everyday practices among NGOs mean that organisations generate a variety of means to negotiate through these differences in ways that are beneficial to them. These strategies were labelled as “brokers”, “translators”, “navigators” and “antagonists”. Such actions allude to the unanticipated consequences that are generated by the EU policy process. It is therefore less certain that EU civil society funding will achieve any specific policy aims it sets out. The outcomes are likely to be more fuzzy, varied and uncertain.

The research also pointed to certain differences in how the findings related to the different regional sites where interviews were conducted. Whilst findings from Ankara and Istanbul yielded similar results, the experiences of interviewees from Diyarbakir were somewhat different. In Diyarbakir NGO actors exhibited a more open attitude towards cooperation with other organisations – arguably because all the NGOs

deal with the consequences of the years of unrest the region has experienced: there is a shared feeling that everyone is in the same boat. The interviewees also felt that EU funding had a stronger impact in the southeast of Turkey. As a region it is much poorer than the other two research sites, which in turn has meant that smaller amounts of EU financial assistance are able to make more of a difference in people's lives. Such differences between the research sites suggested that regions are an important variable to consider. However, it was not within the scope of this research project to do so, as more comparative work to substantiate any findings would have been required.

The account of NGO behaviour that is put forward in this thesis is not one that is strictly limited to Turkey. During the previous rounds of EU enlargement, and indeed among older EU member states, NGOs have exhibited similar tendencies to come up with creative ways in which to resist the demands for change that EU civil society funding places on them. However, the thesis does suggest that there is a particular Turkish narrative for explaining why NGOs behave the way they do, and that this narrative forms an important part of an analysis of Turkish civil society.

#### *Addressing the key themes of the research*

The unpredictability of the Europeanisation processes, a theme underlying the main research question, was approached from an angle that explored the disconnect between the EU policy framework and NGO behaviour. This disconnect was investigated from a number of points of view. Chapters Two and Three emphasised liberal individualism among donors and policymakers as a partial explanation. The Western tradition of thought in relation to civil society contains a strong tendency to draw links between the existence of a vibrant civil society, processes of democratisation and improved policy efficiency. In other words, civil society is seen as a source of "good". In the recent European experience, these ideas have been wrapped around the concept of the third sector, which in the EU policy context forms a two-pronged approach that explores the potential of civil society to improve policy efficiency as well as to bolster the democratic credentials of the EU. This approach also permeates initiatives that deal with civil society in the EU enlargement context: the rationale for engaging with NGOs in Turkey is linked to democratisation and improved dialogue between EU countries and Turkey. The thesis argued that the transposition of civil society-related policies from the EU domestic context to the enlargement context suggest a universal understanding of what is meant by civil society and NGOs. Furthermore, as both of

these goals, democratisation and improved dialogue, are deemed to be core conditions for Turkey's EU accession, the role envisaged for NGOs is instrumental in nature. Following this line of argument, the chapters suggested that NGO work is valued for the contribution it makes to the broader processes of democratisation and Europeanisation. As later chapters illustrated in detail, the conceptualisation of policy combined with its operationalisation through intermediaries such as the CFCU, have resulted in a framework that does not reach the NGO community as effectively as possible.

Chapters Four to Seven together put forward the case that the Turkish socio-cultural and historical context, together with the behaviour of NGOs that is embedded in this context, have made it difficult to realise the goals set by EU policy. The essentialised character of NGO activity that follows on from the historical development of civil society in Turkey means that NGOs are reluctant to cooperate and work together. NGOs tend to be sensitive to polarisation along the lines of politics or identity (secular-religious cleavages being explored in some detail in the thesis). Given that this politically charged context is often intermingled with passionate nationalist and secular tendencies, EU funding (along with other external interventions) is rejected on the grounds that it constitutes an agenda for trying to surreptitiously influence domestic policy and politics. Additionally, NGOs that do not subscribe to such scepticism often felt that EU funding is either unfair in terms of accessibility, remaining unreachable to many organisations, or contains monitoring criteria that are far too complicated. These kinds of attitudes among NGO activists contribute to the unpredictability of EU policy because the policy assumes engagement with, and embracement of, what it represents. Yet many, perhaps a majority of NGOs, refuse to accept EU policy at face value and manoeuvre in ways that reconcile their own goals with those of EU. Chapter Seven demonstrated that NGOs engage in (at least) four different types of activities (translators, brokers, navigators and antagonists) that enable them to either manage policy outcomes, or resist policy influence altogether. The opportunities for these activities emerge, the chapter argued, precisely because a gap is present between the policy aspirations of EU and the reality on the ground. This agency that NGOs exhibit in their activities was identified as a key explanatory factor for the presence of unpredictability in the processes of Europeanisation and democratisation.

## 8.2 Implications

This section focuses on the implications of the research: first examining the theoretical implications, followed by a commentary on the policy implications. From a theoretical point of view, the thesis offers insights into civil society theory and its application in the Turkish case, as well as on how best to conceptualise Europeanisation in relation to EU civil society policy in Turkey. The policy implications of this research project focus on the impact of the policy process on social actors, namely looking at the repercussions EU funding policy has had on NGOs. In addition the research has explored the agency possessed by the said actors to carve a space within the policy process to act independently.

### *Theory*

The theoretical implications fall into two broad areas. The first attends to the nature of civil society in Turkey and the insights this offers to any theoretical discussion regarding civil society. The second area of consideration relates to the processes of Europeanisation and democratisation and how these are best conceptualised in the context of EU civil society policy in Turkey. In addressing these issues, the thesis brought together literature from civil society studies and European studies, using this linkage to explain how Europeanisation and democratisation is likely to unfold in the context of EU civil society funding.

The historical development and the present-day dynamics of civil society activity in Turkey support an interpretation that agrees with a Hegelian description of civil society as a site of struggle and contest, where particular interests are in constant competition with other particular interests, to be contained by a set of universal interests that are able to constrain what is regarded as acceptable behaviour. The state in Turkey remains active in defining what interests can be regarded as universal. Whilst Hegel regarded the state as the “ultimate arbiter” in societal disputes, there are grounds for questioning the democratic legitimacy of such actions. One way to look at these democratic limitations is through the hegemonic struggles that are constantly being played out between different political or ideological perspectives within civil society. To evoke a Gramscian analysis, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic voices challenge each other’s legitimacy in a public debate. This is largely conducted through an essentialised debate, where the voices are engaged in a uncompromising mission to

“convert” the other to see the wrongs of their way. Some observers describe the different positions as “empty signifiers” and argue that the underlying battle is simply about power rather than engaging in a legitimate political debate<sup>115</sup>, yet this still remains a useful way of depicting civil society relations in Turkey as it attests to their contestational nature. It is not merely different particular interests that are jostling for position, but rather different versions of the universal interests that are battling for the heart of the state.

The Turkish experience also suggests that the contestational nature of civil society relations can, to some extent, be managed by rights-based approaches that anchor activism in the universal discourse of rights. The rights-based debates offer an alternate discourse that can challenge the essentialist nature of the secular-Islamic debate in particular. It is here that common ground – even if only for limited periods at a time – has been found between differing ideological groups represented within Turkish civil society. The Islamic discourse on civil society and the secular approach find shared ground in accepting the primacy of human rights as a common denominator of public debate. It would seem that rights-based discourses offer an opportunity to bring secular and Islamic NGOs together around common issues, even where such collaborative events remain volatile and uncertain in their outcomes. The fact that this is possible has certainly been demonstrated by the women’s movement. EU involvement has contributed to the process of building an enabling environment within which these types of relationships are made possible. Whilst this observation supports the EU agenda of Europeanisation, it is also important to recognise the limitations such approaches present in the Turkish case.

The incongruence between EU policy and the behaviour of civil society on the ground can be also approached from a theoretical perspective. EU policy is heavily influenced by a third sector perspective of civil society, which is essentially a political economy approach that emphasises the efficiency gains and increased effectiveness greater civil society involvement can bring. This, however, is a rather technical approach that pays less attention to the political and ideological content of civil society. The incentives that are built into EU policy measures to induce certain type of behaviour may be side-stepped by a desire to engage in a particular type of political or

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<sup>115</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti (2010) “Secularism Contested: Debate and Dissent in Turkey”. Paper read at the *Turkish Contemporary Studies Seminar Series*, London School of Economics, London, 15 February 2010.



ideological activism. Neither does this approach fully appreciate how local actors interpret EU policy on civil society and how their responses are shaped by their own interests and the domestic political context.

The framework of sociological institutionalism proposes a way to understand this incongruence and to make sense of the way in which civil society responses to EU civil society policy manifest themselves. It is by appreciating the influence of the social context in which NGOs operate and the informal rules and norms that govern their behaviour that we can understand how EU civil society policy becomes socialised by NGOs and becomes meaningful in the local context.

The perspective of sociological institutionalism also has implications when considering what kind of Europeanisation is achievable. In Chapter Three, Europeanisation was categorised in its political, policy and societal forms. It would seem, on the basis of this research, that in the Europeanisation process Turkey is currently undergoing, the impact of EU civil society policy in the short term is likely to be limited to the political and policy forms. It is possible for external agents to engage in the formal, structural change processes. Societal change processes, however, are much more difficult to influence. This does not mean that a policy intervention, such as the one under investigation here, has no impact. Rather, it shows that the impact is likely to be ambivalent and context-dependent, making it very difficult to pursue a short-term policy agenda with specified outcomes.

### *Policy*

The research speaks to the complexity of policy processes as change processes and describes the difficulties policy interventions face in this regard. Policy can be an effective way to induce change. For example in Chapter Three, the role of policy documentation and document language was characterised as transformative, in the sense that the assumptions and aspirations evident in policy interventions encapsulate a certain mode of behaviour that shape actors' understanding of the role they are to play. Policymaking that takes the policy content as the sole impetus for change takes its cue from rational choice institutionalism, applying "strategic calculus" in assuming that actors form preferences through rational calculation. In this way EU policy takes its agenda-setting power as a sufficient carrot to encourage Turkish NGOs to act in a certain way that is conducive to democratisation and Europeanisation.

Policy that induces change, however, is likely to be met with uncertainty. These tensions arise in particular from the discrepancies between the everyday practices of NGOs on the ground and the policy expectations. This is evident in an example referred to in Chapter Five, where an EU-funded programme to improve relations between government and civil society actors results in a series of relatively unsuccessful pilot projects. Similarly, in Chapter Six the account of NGO reactions to the introduction of the CFCU as the central administrative body were on the whole very negative and suspicious. In each example, what is at issue is the incongruence between what is proposed and the current state of affairs, together with the tense response this creates among NGOs. This asks questions about the accuracy of those assumptions that perceive of NGOs as agents of change.

The incongruence alone, however, is not the sole explanation for the uncertainty. The NGO reactions are embedded in the domestic political context and the meaning of EU policy is based on local interpretations. For one, the policy process lacks a consultative aspect. There may be reasonable justifications for not engaging in consultations, given the tendency of such processes to take a relatively long time. However, on the basis of these research findings, the lack of consultation correlates with a lack of ownership among the recipient NGOs. It may well be that in instances where the policy intervention cuts across national or cultural boundaries, such consultative processes are particularly important. This could ease the tensions that currently surround EU funding, especially where NGOs feel that the EU is imposing an external agenda upon them.

The above observations are connected with the means through which funding is made available – projects. The emphasis on projects as the primary means for the distribution of funds, in particular the monitoring mechanisms that accompany project funding, can compound the feeling among recipients that the EU aims to control civil society in Turkey. Each of the three empirical chapters offers insights into how civil society actors perceive this to be the case and how this contributes to the level of tension between the EU and civil society. Quantifiable indicators of project success are largely reliant on accounting data, focusing on what the funding has been spent on. Whilst this is clearly important in ensuring that funds have been spent appropriately, such measures are less able to speak about how NGOs realise the delivery of projects. In other words, the emphasis is on the “what” at the expense of the “how”. Although such an assessment is not an entirely fair account of how project success is measured,

management of such perceptions is an issue that has an impact on how readily a given policy intervention is accepted by the agents used to deliver that policy. Without managing these perceptions, EU policies in Turkey may have limited success in that they deliver policy Europeanisation and not societal Europeanisation.

As indicated by the above discussion, there is indeed evidence that EU civil society policy is able to induce certain types of changes. Yet, any such impact is rather ambivalent and uncertain in nature. Funding has shaped civil society in a certain direction, creating winners and losers on the bases of organisational ability and orientation; by offering encouragement to certain types of organisations, the policy has amounted to a transformative process. At the same time, policy that induces change also generates uncertain outcomes. EU policies have a sense of being imposed from above, a feeling that is amplified by the use of rigidly conceptualised projects as the means of delivering the policy. There is an additional dimension to this process that needs to be taken into account. The incongruence between policy aspirations and means of policy delivery on the one hand and the current state of affairs on the other hand leads to strategies of resistance and deviance on the part of local actors.

These strategies manifest themselves in various forms and are not readily controlled by the policy process. In explaining policy outcomes Chapter Seven referred to the broker and translator framework in order to explain how NGOs generate locally meaningful outcomes from externally controlled policy processes. Additionally, the chapter elaborated on this model by highlighting NGO roles as navigators and antagonists in order to illustrate their resourcefulness in making the project framework create positive outcomes in ways that were not anticipated by the policymakers. Exploration of these strategies is helpful in identifying certain limits to the ability of EU policy to import a set of external norms that subsequently shape local actors' perceptions of the role they are to play. In particular, it is important to engage with the multiplicity of reactions that any given policy intervention will generate among the recipient actors. Furthermore, it is also important to appreciate the impact policy has outside the confines of the policy process. This seems to be of crucial relevance in situations where policy crosses cultural and national boundaries.

The thesis has highlighted the uncertainty and ambiguity that is evident in the outcomes of EU funding, but where exactly does this leave us in terms of moving forward? Has the EU either adopted “wrong” aims, or “wrong” policies to achieve the said aims? In the context of the EU pre-accession process that Turkey has embarked

on, this does not seem a plausible argument to make. Certain steps need to be taken for Turkey to continue its journey towards an eventual membership, and the nature of civil society funding is one aspect of that process. However, what exactly is achievable through this funding should perhaps be given some further thought. Processes of Europeanisation or democratisation are not simple behavioural traits that can be adopted over night. They are long-term processes that evolve incrementally and will inevitably look different in each country context. In order to ensure that the NGOs are fully involved and share the policy aims, they should be included in the decision-making processes that form a part of the annual review of policy priorities. The practice of participating in the decision-making process may in fact be as Europeanising or democratising as the projects that follow.

If the EU continues to present itself as a benevolent but inflexible bureaucratic behemoth, in the eyes of the NGOs it may not differ so much from the state which traditions it is trying to change. It may therefore be more prudent to focus on processes, rather than short-term outcomes. Whether a given project lives up to the stated aims word by word may be less important than ensuring the aims are arrived at through a participatory process in the first place. By including NGOs at all stages of the decision-making, they are likely gain a much stronger sense of ownership over the policies and projects that they are asked to act upon. This may mean that the EU will have to compromise on some of its aims in order to facilitate a genuine dialogue, but given the current state to uncertainty in terms of policy outcomes, this would almost certainly not be a regressive step in terms of actual (as opposed to stated) outcomes.

### **8.3 Further research**

The thesis has argued that change processes such as those involved in Europeanisation are context-dependent. In this regard there are further areas that could be investigated. Such investigations could in turn help to better understand the opportunities and limitations EU funding for civil society can offer.

One such dimension is found in the differences that exist between eastern and western Turkey. Centre-periphery relations have for a long time been considered a key to explaining Turkish politics (Mardin 1973) and it seems there are interesting grounds for exploring the differences in how EU funding has been received in eastern and western Turkey. The eastern and south-eastern regions have received a significant amount of funding (see figure 4 in Chapter Six), making this an interesting arena to

test further the hypothesis that domestic political developments guide the way in which EU funding policies play out in practice. The political situation in the Kurdish areas (Çelik 2005; Yavuz 1999) is likely to create a different environment where EU policies are received differently from the experiences in, for example, Ankara and Istanbul.

Another fruitful avenue for further research would be to investigate, in more detail, the operation of the current programme of civil society funding that is delivered under the Civil Society Dialogue programme. It was not possible to conduct research on projects within this programme as part of the research for this thesis because the projects were carried out after fieldwork had been completed in 2008-9. As this thesis has suggested, such an approach may be better suited to influence societal Europeanisation in particular. In this regard, it would be interesting to learn whether this decisive shift in how funding was delivered has also influenced the way it has been received by NGOs and to explore whether projects carried out under the theme of dialogue have been internalised differently by civil society actors.

## Appendix: Topic Guide

### A TOPIC GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH NGOS:

#### 1 Organisation:

- When was the organisation founded?
- Why was the organisation founded in the first place? Have the aims changed in any way and if so, why?
- Can you describe the work your organisation undertakes in more detail? (projects, issues, outcomes)
- Does the work have an explicitly political aspect?
- Are there other NGOs working in this area? (follow up when discussing NGO relationships)
- Is your NGO a member of any umbrella group or a network and why have you opted to join/not join? (follow up when discussing NGO relationships)

#### 2 Funding:

- How is the organisation funded?
- What would you say are some of the strengths/weaknesses of your current funding situation?
- Would you consider funding from:
  - Companies, individuals, government, EU, other external funders
  - Why yes/no
- Overall, for your organisation, can you find sufficient funding from domestic sources to fully develop the ideas/aspirations you have as an organisation?
- Are there any sources of funding that are inappropriate for NGOs?

#### 3 External funding (EU):

- What were the main reasons behind the decision to apply for external funding?
  - Who made this decision?
  - Was there any internal discussion on whether the application should be made?
- Can you comment on your experience of the process (application process, managing project, financial management).
- Who would say was more in control of the way in which the project unfolded – donor or NGO? (ask for examples of how this control came about)
- Can you describe any other positive/negative experiences that related to the process?
- Would you apply again – why yes/no?

#### Relations with other NGOs:

- Do you collaborate with other NGOs? **YES**
  - Which ones and why? How important are these relations?
  - Are all of these organisations in the same city, or also in other cities?
  - What are the reasons for collaboration? (work on same issues, political opportunity window, work together on a project?)

- In your experience, how long do such relationships last. Are they more often long term or short term?
- Do relations with other NGOs help you to achieve your aims as an organisation?
- Do you collaborate with other NGOs? **NO**
  - Why no collaboration?
  - What is your view on collaborations that you see between other NGOs – are these effective?

**Relations with government:**

- Does your organisation have experience of working with governmental actors?
  - Central government
  - Local (municipal) government
- **YES**
  - How important are these relations to your organisation?
  - What are the reasons for collaboration? (delivery of services, political issues, funded projects)
  - Can you identify any differences between the relations with different levels of gov't?
  - Would you say these relationships have been generally positive? Why yes? Why not?
- **NO**
  - Is this a deliberate decision/policy by the organisation?
  - Are there circumstances in which you would consider relations with government
  - What is your view on organisations that do collaborate with governmental actors

**Impact of EU:**

- In what ways has the EU accession process had an impact on civil society? (funding, environment)
- Has the impact been overall positive or overall negative? Can you give examples?
- In what ways has the EU accession process had an impact on your organisation. (direct or indirect)
- Experiences of project funding:
  - Details of projects (duration, amount, purpose and how many)
  - Experiences with **CSDC** or **CFCU**? If yes, what kind?
  - Has EU at any point consulted your organisation or other about the content of its programmes and projects? In what ways? How did you feel about this?

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