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Funding Democracy, Funding Social Services? The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights in the Context of Competing Narratives in Turkey

Hanna Mühlenhoff

Within the process of Turkey’s European Union (EU) accession, the EU aims to strengthen Turkey’s democratization through various programmes focusing on the role of civil society. By funding non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the EU intends to empower NGOs to take on a self-responsible role in Turkey’s democratization process. In this article, I argue that the EU indeed aims to support a liberal narrative through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) yet by the means of neo-liberal governmental power. Through this it renders the NGOs rather technical instead of political and thus misses the chance of strengthening a liberal narrative that could pose an alternative to the reoccurring hegemonic struggle between a Kemalist and a pro-Islam narrative in Turkey.

Introduction

Policymakers and scholars have considered civil society in the form of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to be crucial for Turkey’s democratization process in the context of accession to the European Union (EU). The EU Delegation to Turkey states that ‘[...] a more dynamic civil society can contribute to the accession process becoming more than just a technical process between the candidate country and the EU and to sustain public support for accession’. Thus, the EU puts a focus on supporting the development of civil society in Turkey through various programmes such as the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), the Civil Society Dialogue, the EU Civil Society Facility and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

In this paper, I argue for the importance of taking the domestic context of third countries into account when evaluating the effects of the EU civil society programmes. In the following, I suggest an analysis of the EU civil society funding in Turkey based
on Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality and a neo-Gramscian discursive approach to hegemony. While it is hardly feasible to measure the impact of the EU funding on democratization in terms of policy impact in Turkey, this approach shows what the EU programmes actually can do in terms of a discursive impact.

In contemporary Turkey, several ideological dividing lines, or what I call narratives, struggle for hegemony. Traditionally, Turkish civil society has been strongly divided along liberal, Kemalist, Islamic, left and right-wing narratives. While the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP), a party with Sunni Muslim roots, has been an advocate of a moderate and liberal Islamic narrative between 1999 and 2008, there are signs of a re-strengthening of a more authoritarian and conservative Islamic discourse and a reoccurring divide between an Islamic and a Kemalist narrative. In addition, under the AKP, neo-liberal reforms have led to a declining welfare state in which Islamic charitable organizations such as Deniz Feneri (Lighthouse) have become an important provider of social services. At the same time, the liberal sector of civil society has also expanded and professionalized.

Markus Ketola analysed the EU civil society programmes for Turkey focusing on the misfit between the domestic Turkish context of civil society and the liberal civil society conception of the EU. He argues that the EU civil society support disunites Turkish civil society with some groups being funded and other organizations resisting EU funds. According to him, this makes a success of the EU’s policy unlikely. Yet, it remains unclear what a success would be, how exactly the EU civil society funding influences the NGOs being funded and what EU grants contribute to the position of a liberal narrative in the discursive struggles in Turkey at large. This is what I aim to do in this paper.

I will specify my theoretical approach and present an analysis of the governmentality of the EIDHR, including the example of Turkish NGOs funded by the EIDHR in 2011. To illustrate the consequences of the EU’s governmentality, I choose the EIDHR because it is the only truly bottom-up EU funding instrument for civil society organizations in Turkey. The EIDHR is considered to be one of the most promising civil society instruments since it avoids the interaction with respective governments and instead focuses on civil society. Funding under this instrument is independent from the Turkish government in contrast to funding under IPA which goes through a governmental body. The NGOs funded act independently from European civil society organizations in contrast to the Civil Society Dialogue in which the European NGOs and target NGOs interact. Moreover, also unlike the EU Civil Society Facility, the EIDHR does not focus on NGO training by the EU but funds projects planned and carried out by the NGOs in a self-responsible way.

I focus on the consequences of the EIDHR’s neo-liberal governmentality for the NGOs and for the hegemonic struggles between different narratives in Turkey in which the NGOs engage. I argue that the EIDHR supports NGOs of a liberal narrative but technologizes and de-politicizes the NGOs funded at the same time. Thus, the neo-liberal governmentality does not constitute them as political actors but as providers of administrative, social and legal advice and services. In the context of a reoccurring struggle between the pro-Islam and the Kemalist narrative, it is unlikely...
that the liberal narrative of NGOs funded and depoliticized by the EU’s neo-liberal rationalities change the hegemonic narrative struggles in Turkey.

**EU Democracy Promotion and Civil Society**

Civil society funding is part of the EU’s democracy promotion agenda that addresses candidate countries as well as states that are neither EU members nor candidates for membership, which is also explored by Özdemir in this issue. In general, civil society funding comes with positive normative assumptions. It is usually considered to be an *ex ante*, positive bottom-up instrument: it is transparent, reaches to the level of society and offers something to a third party in order to be able to do something—mostly a project—in the future. Mainstream literature considers NGOs to generally be a ‘good’ force in international relations.⁹

As civil society funding is increasingly popular as a bottom-up instrument capable of avoiding direct confrontation with respective governments, we need to approach it in a more critical manner to understand what it does. For a critical assessment of this policy, a better understanding of different civil society concepts is necessary. Until now, literature on democracy promotion is generally under-theorized¹⁰ while at the same time indirectly assuming a certain liberal and ‘positive’ understanding of civil society. The problem is threefold.

Firstly, the NGOs nowadays are equated with civil society, a term that previously referred to social movements struggling for democratic rights in authoritarian regimes. When social movements ceased to exist, the industrialized countries found a new form of civil society that could coexist with the capitalist structures. The so-called neo-liberal concept defines civil society as the ‘third sector’ existing in addition to the market and the state. The third sector mainly consists of NGOs. The third sector functions like the market while at the same time exercising functions formerly intrinsic to the state.¹¹ The concept of a third sector is based on the neo-liberal assumption that the responsibilities of the state need to be reduced and privatized.¹²

At the same time, the assumption that civil society is good for democracy is now simply also applied to NGOs. Donors assume that, ‘while NGOs are part of civil society, they also strengthen it through their activities, which in turn supports the democratic process.’¹³ The NGOs supposedly pluralize and strengthen the institutional area because they enable more groups to participate in politics. In addition, they are expected to work with grassroots groups and thus represent discriminated and marginalized groups. The NGOs are supposed to balance state power by checking abuses, suggesting alternatives and forming opposition.¹⁴ In a Tocquevillian tradition, NGOs and more broadly associations in general are schools for democracy. Associations teach democratic traits and create so-called ‘social capital’.¹⁵ The liberal peace (building) discourse,¹⁶ as well as global governance literature,¹⁷ assumes that the NGOs generally increase legitimacy and accountability by representing the marginalized and providing channels for citizens’ participation. Whether this is the case is much disputed though. While the NGOs supposedly represent the underprivileged, internally they are rather accountable to their elitist and educated members.¹⁸
Secondly, it is assumed that civil society generally pursues a ‘good’ cause. For instance, social constructivists argue that the NGOs act as norm entrepreneurs in international relations, meaning that they become the advocate for a certain norm, for instance, for the human rights norm, and lobby for this norm.\textsuperscript{19} In fact, the NGOs are not all similar but rather very different not only in the way they organize themselves\textsuperscript{20} but also in the kind of tasks they fulfil, the goals they pursue and their addressees. On the other hand, donors imply that it is possible to differentiate between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ kind of NGOs instead of considering that there is competition between different NGOs with diverging interests.\textsuperscript{21}

Thirdly, donors assume that civil society opposes the state even though they support the neo-liberal form of civil society. Salamon and Anheier\textsuperscript{22} demonstrated in the 1990s that third sector organizations and the state instead might be mutual supporters. Donors assume that civil society opposes the state even though they support the neo-liberal form of civil society that is considered to be a neutral mediator and thus depoliticized.\textsuperscript{23} I argue that civil society and the state are not two separate spheres but are internally divided by the same ideological cleavages as neo-Gramscians would suggest.\textsuperscript{24} Thus, democracy promotion interacts with the different narratives represented by NGOs, civil society at large as well as political actors in Turkey.

**Neo-liberal Governmentality and Civil Society**

Milja Kurki\textsuperscript{25} showed that the EIDHR, a bottom-up instrument for democracy promotion, is also implicitly based on such a neo-liberal understanding of civil society. This neo-liberal conception is transferred through a specific governmentality. Government is understood in a Foucauldian sense as a relation of power.\textsuperscript{26} Kurki\textsuperscript{27} argues that the EU exercises power through encouraging neo-liberal rationalities even though the EU might do this unintentionally. The EU pushes the NGOs to become service providers and depoliticizes their work while at the same time employing a certain idea of ‘good life’. Kurki analysed the strategies and structures of the EIDHR but not its concrete consequences for a specific case. I will show that the EIDHR documents for Turkey also (re)produce such neo-liberal governmentality and how this is reflected in the projects funded. The Foucauldian concept of governmentality helps to understand the implications of applying the neo-liberal concept of civil society as well as to analyse the relationship between donor and receiver.

To Foucault, government does not refer to politics or the implementation of laws but applies to all areas of life including the private sphere. Government is one form of power that is not only political but more broadly refers to how ‘the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed’.\textsuperscript{28} It includes both the governing of the self and the governing of others: ‘In this respect too, successful government of others is often thought to depend on the ability of those others to govern themselves, and it must therefore aim to secure the conditions under which they are enabled to do so.’\textsuperscript{29} Foucault refers to the rationalities of government as ‘governmentality’.\textsuperscript{30}

Neo-liberal governmentality differs from liberal governmentality in the way that neo-liberal governmentality applies market principles to all spheres—the economy,
the state and civil society, and in the end also to the individual. In liberal
governmentality the state still organizes the market. According to Foucault neo-
liberal governmentality prevailed in the USA and in Europe in the last part of the 20th
century. Yet, governmental power is never just exercised by one institution or the
state but is ‘rooted in the systems of social networks’. As others have argued, the
EU as well as other international organizations also act according to this rationality
and accept a kind of ‘economic constitutionalism’ that refers to a neo-liberal view on
the market as the instance of order and regulation. Moreover, according to Ronnie
D. Lipschutz, international organizations and NGOs are part of a neo-liberal ‘global
governmentality’.

Neo-liberal governmentality rests on the idea of a *homo economicus* that acts
according to cost–benefit calculations and thus in an effective way. Thus
individuals become ‘entrepreneurs of themselves’. Yet, even though individuals
become responsible for the creation of wealth and welfare, they are not really free but
are rather expected to act in the ways suggested by neo-liberalism. Moreover, the
individuals are moulded into a bigger group or context which is the sphere of civil
society. Only in this way could the ‘governmentability [. . .] of these individuals’ be
ensured: ‘[. . .] the art of governing must be given a reference, a domain or field of
reference, a new reality on which it will be exercised, and I think this new field of
reference is civil society’. Thus, civil society consists of the economic individuals
that can only be governed in a neo-liberal way in the setting of civil society: ‘Civil
society is [. . .] a concept of governmental technology’.

In contrast to the concept of governance that differs from government only with
regards to the assumption that government does not always have to be hierarchical,
governmentality stresses the structural effects: governmentality ‘governs’ individ-
uals by making them conceptualise the world in specific ways and regard certain
forms of action appropriate. Thus, in the case of EU civil society funding in Turkey,
the EIDHR transfers a specific way of conducting civil society work, such as working
in project cycles, to Turkish NGOs. Governmental power is productive in the sense
that it constitutes the individual and civil society in a certain way. Its discourse makes
some behaviour ‘normal’ and others less possible. According to Hans-Martin
Jaeger it is especially the liberal governmentalities that depoliticize the individual
and civil society because they ‘transform[s] political issues into technical and
managerial problems, thereby removing them from the sphere of political decision
making and fundamental political contention’. This even more applies to neo-liberal
governmentality in which the individual and civil society are constituted as being part
of the market and thus having to act according to market principles.

When the state exercises such neo-liberal governmental power, this also implies
that in spite of its claim of the self-responsible and independent individual, civil
society and the state are actually not completely independent from each other.
Instead, civil society is the object and the end of governmentality in general. While
the state aims at ‘empowering’ individuals and making them independent from the
state or government in taking care of the provision of their own services, ‘[. . .] the
state’s exercise of governmental power can be seen as in continuity with, or as grafted
on to society’s immanent relations of power’. Neo-liberal governmentality implies
that the government transfers its own way of governing or its own rationality of
government to the ones governed\(^4\) while its own role decreases and instead
individuals become responsible for regulation:\(^5\) ‘Neo-liberalism is a political
rationality that tries to render the social domain economic and to link a reduction in
(welfare) state services and security systems to the increasing call for “personal
responsibility” and “self-care”\(^6\). Therefore, ‘[…] much of what appears to be
opposition—by civil society organisations in particular—is better understood as
integral to governmentality’\(^7\).

**The Neo-liberal Governmentality of the EIDHR**

As Kurki\(^8\) and others\(^9\) argue, neo-liberal governmentality is also encouraged by the
EU. I argue that the EU transfers neo-liberal governmentality in at least two ways.
Firstly, the EU transfers the responsibility to foster further democratization to the
domestic civil society by **empowering** NGOs to do so. This implies the idea that
Turkish civil society should help itself and provide what is missing in Turkish
democracy. The EIDHR thus also constitutes NGOs as **providers of social services**.
Secondly, the EIDHR constitutes the NGOs empowered as economic actors that have
to act according to market principles. This means that they have to be **efficient** in
terms of costs and benefits, have to be capable of **self-management** in terms of self-
responsibility and accountability, as well as have to work in **project circles** that allow
for the assessment of **effective** implementation.

In the following I will show how the EU articulates these discursive concepts of
empowerment on the one side and market principles on the other side in the general
European Commission’s ‘Guiding Principles’ for Turkey for the period 2011–15 and
in its calls for proposals of the EIDHR for Turkey since its existence (2007–12).

**Empowering Civil Society**

The general European Commission’s ‘Guiding Principles’ for EU civil society support
in Turkey for 2011–15 states: ‘While not supporting party political activities, the EC
thus aims at contributing to a more open, participatory and dynamic Turkish
democracy.’\(^10\) The Commission intends to support these liberal goals by ‘strengthening
the capacities of organised (active) citizens’.\(^11\) This is a form of empowerment which is
a strategy of neo-liberal governmentality in which actors are given the capabilities to
act self-responsibly and in a supposedly efficient way.\(^12\) This way it also transfers a
certain self-understanding and implicit goals to the individuals.\(^13\)

The EIDHR calls for proposal for Turkey from 2007 to 2012 stress the **empowerment** of civil society more clearly. Except for the introduction of more
specific priority areas in 2010, the calls for application are almost identical. First of all,
they state the liberal objectives of the EIDHR in the lot for ‘Strengthening Civil
Society Involvement’ to be ‘to contribute to the development and consolidation of
democracy and the rule of law and respect for all human rights and fundamental
freedoms.’\(^14\) The strategy of empowerment is expressed as: ‘the participation of target
groups and/or final beneficiaries to the extent possible […] in order to **empower**
these groups for active citizenship and enhance their representation in civil society.\textsuperscript{60} Thus, here the EU’s neo-liberal governmentality reaches out to the individual by addressing civil society first because following a neo-liberal governmentality it assumes that the economic individual is integrated into civil society.\textsuperscript{61} Thus, the NGOs funded and empowered by the EU are supposed to in turn also empower the individuals of their target group to take over responsibilities. This is what projects funded by the EU actually try to do, as I will show later.

\textit{Civil Society as Economic Actors}

The goals stated in the ‘Guiding Principles’ are the ‘full effective enjoyment of the freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association’.\textsuperscript{62} Moreover, ‘effective improvements regarding the freedom of expression and assembly’ and ‘effective civic participation in local, regional and national-level policy processes [. . .]’,\textsuperscript{63} the more ‘effectively’ mobilizing of support, ‘effective advocacy skills’ and ‘more effectively’ networking were necessary. While the principles stress the goals of spreading liberal norms, strongly demanding ‘effectiveness’ also implies that the effects or what we could call the ‘output’ can be measured and would justify the input. The ‘Guiding Principles’ itself list ‘indicators’ to measure progress in the different areas and thus ensure its effectiveness.\textsuperscript{65} Yet, that this effect can be measured after a project is concluded is questionable as the internalization of norms only happens slowly.\textsuperscript{66}

The calls for application ask for ‘project proposals’ and make clear that first of all only actions that last up to 24 months maximum (18 months in 2009) are eligible for grants.\textsuperscript{67} Thus the EIDHR only gives grants for projects that begin and end at a specific time. Only short-term civil society work is supported.

Further, the calls stress the idea of efficient self-management more concretely. Every call includes the necessity that the NGOs eligible have to be ‘independent of the state as regards decision-making, budgetary control and the appointment of staff [. . .]’.\textsuperscript{68} Yet, so-called ‘associates’, but not ‘partners’, who do not get any funding but take part in the project actually can be national public-sector institutions, municipal authorities, city council, muhtars (head of a village), and local and national media.\textsuperscript{69} The EU also pronounces the self-responsibility and the need for management capacities of the NGOs in the call for proposals. Eligible applicants have to ‘be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with their partners [. . .]’,\textsuperscript{70} and ‘have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action’.\textsuperscript{71} As in the guidelines, the need for efficiency in terms of budget\textsuperscript{72} and administration\textsuperscript{73} as well as for effectiveness of action\textsuperscript{74} and sustainability of the projects\textsuperscript{75} is strongly pronounced. The NGOs are constituted as economic actors that have internalized the principles of efficiency and self-management. Generally, ‘[T]he award criteria allow [. . .] grants to be awarded to actions which maximize the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals.’\textsuperscript{76}

Thus, the EIDHR supports liberal values as part of a liberal narrative and aims to empower the NGOs by giving financial and also ideological support for realizing liberal values through projects involving citizens or ‘target groups’. Yet, the EU also transfers neo-liberal rationalities through its governmentality, this way constituting
the NGOs as market actors constrained by having to act in an economically efficient, self-managerial way and conducting short-term project work. The EU’s neo-liberal governmentality does not encourage the NGOs to see themselves as political actors in the democratization process but instead renders them technical with a focus on short-term projects.

Daniella Kuzmanovic has shown how the NGOs funded by the EU adapt to the way of doing civil society work as suggested by the EU. I argue that this is an effect of the EU’s neo-liberal governmentality that constitutes NGOs as the technical providers of services. The EIDHR’s neo-liberal governmentality fits the perception of the EU as a functional, expert-driven and apolitical community. As Lene Hansen and Michael C. Williams argue, the EU is based on a myth of modernity and rationalization and its ‘true power is to depoliticise its object’.

This discourse thus leads to the consequences that formerly political questions are not a matter of political contestation any longer and thus alternatives appear impossible.

While the EIDHR indeed supports a liberal narrative, its neo-liberal governmentality constitutes its subjects as well as the issues at hand economically and apolitically. To understand its consequences in the Turkish domestic context, I present a discursive understanding of the Gramscian concept of hegemony in the following.

**Discursive Hegemony and the Narrative Context in Turkey**

Following the poststructuralist reading of Antonio Gramsci by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, I assume that hegemony is created through discourse. Identities are constituted by discursive practices that are not fixed, yet partially fixed by so-called ‘nodal points’. ‘Nodal points’ are ‘privileged discursive points’. Thus, hegemonic struggles are not material struggles but ‘articulatory’ or discursive struggles, as also argued by Alpan in this issue. To Laclau and Mouffe, the concept of class is not appropriate any longer for analysing the contemporary world in which more complex social relations exist. Instead of class, I use the concept of ‘narratives’ and assume that different narratives struggle for hegemony in Turkey. Narratives are ‘rule systems’ that structure discourses and are used by actors either consciously or subconsciously.

When hegemony exists, civil society considers the dominant ideology as being part of itself and sees the way of doing things as the ‘normal continuation’ of political society. Then, a specific group of society has realized that the interests of other groups are also its interests or that their interests can also be the interests of others. This is in fact the outcome of what Foucault calls productive power. According to Gramsci, the state and intellectuals serve the function of educators producing consent within civil society. Politics is a learning process influenced by the integral state turning particularity into universality. Also civil society organizations educate the citizens by teaching them what is normal. I assume that the consent is created through discourse in which different institutions participate. Individuals come to see themselves in the ways suggested by the dominant ideology. NGOs as part of a
heterogeneous civil society can take different positions within the hegemonic struggles and either reproduce or change hegemony.\textsuperscript{92}

The dominant ideology becomes ‘common sense’ or as Gramsci also calls it the ‘forma mentis’. To change politics, underprivileged groups can act in accordance to the common sense and within the established rules. Gramsci criticizes such a reformist strategy though because it strengthened the bourgeois hegemony.\textsuperscript{93}

In fact, I argue that the EU pursues such a reformist strategy by transferring neoliberal governmentality to NGOs because the funded projects are supposed to work within the domestic rules and not supposed to actually challenge the hegemonic discourse in Turkey. As stated before, there has been an increasing narrative polarization in Turkey since 2008 after a time of reconciliation. The struggle over discursive hegemony between a Kemalist and a pro-Islam narrative has re-intensified with fierce debates about allowing the headscarf at universities,\textsuperscript{94} the status of the religious İmam Hatip schools,\textsuperscript{95} the Kemalists constantly accusing Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of betraying the Turkish nation when making an attempt to solve the Kurdish issue,\textsuperscript{96} and Erdoğan’s discursive attempts to criminalize abortions and caesareans.\textsuperscript{97} In the mid-2000s when the Kemalist establishment felt that it was losing control over the institutions of the state and the hegemonic position in Turkey’s public discourse, it re-strengthened its attacks on the pro-Islam narrative represented by the AKP government that also has strengthened its rhetoric.\textsuperscript{98}

While the discursive struggle is dominated by these two narratives, there is also a liberal discourse. This discourse is heterogeneous in itself including pro-Kemalist, pro-Islam or leftist elements.\textsuperscript{99} Here, I define the liberal narrative in rather broad terms as possibly including all these groups stressing the importance of democratic reforms, liberal values and minority rights. It is this kind of inclusive broad liberal narrative that the EU supports.

In this domestic context, the EU uses neo-liberal governmentality and thus reconstitutes NGOs like economic actors to support the liberal narrative. This conception of civil society indeed goes hand in hand with the neo-liberal restructuring of Turkey in the past three decades that has been continued by the governing AKP.\textsuperscript{100} Thus, the EU’s neo-liberal governmentality might be successful in Turkey in the way that the government respects or at least accepts the work of the NGOs reconstituted in a neo-liberal way and pursuing its objectives within the domestic boundaries of the hegemonic discourses. While not presenting an alternative to the hegemonic narratives, at best it might feed into the Islamic liberal narrative of the AKP. I will show in the following how the NGOs and their projects funded by the EIDHR are influenced by its neo-liberal rationalities.

The NGOs Funded in the Context of Competing Narratives and EU Neo-liberal Governmentality

The EU enforces a neo-liberal governmentality as shown by Kurki\textsuperscript{101} as well as by my analysis of the EIDHR documents for Turkey in order to push a liberal narrative. In the following I will give examples of NGOs and projects granted funds in 2011 to give a picture of what kind of organizations are supported and how their projects
adapt to the neo-liberal rationalities set out by the EU. I argue that the NGOs funded conduct projects focusing on empowering their target groups and providing services to these groups as a constitute effect of the EIDHR’s neo-liberal governmentality.

In December 2011, 10 Turkish organizations were awarded grants. The selection reflects the priorities set in the call. It aimed at ‘mainstreaming gender equality’ and ‘targeting socially excluded groups (particularly but not limited to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Transvestite (LGBT); and Roma)’ proposals. The choice of the organizations shows that the EU indeed aims to support liberal rights in Turkey such as the rights of women and the LGBTTs as well as of religious minorities such as Alevi and refugees and asylum seekers. It also tries to involve the Turkish youth as well as teachers as multipliers in spreading liberal norms. Thus, the EU’s intention is clearly reflected in its selection of NGO to be funded.

Generally, the NGO projects funded by the EIDHR follow the same script largely doing two things: helping and empowering people in need and preparing some kind of product to make the outcome of their project measurable. Political involvement is largely limited to providing information on the issue at hand to government officials and politicians.

One of the women’s organizations funded is Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınagı Vakfı (Purple Roof Women’s Shelter) and its project ‘Women’s Collaboration for Justice’. The organization is independent from any political party and has been a key actor in the women’s movement from the 1980s onwards. Generally, the NGO works to help any woman who experienced violence independent of what their belief is. Mor Çatı engages in a liberal discourse that stresses the rights of every woman in Turkey independent of their religious beliefs. The organization also works with local women’s groups as well as with other European women’s NGOs. The EIDHR-funded project documents what women experienced and how the NGO helped them. It includes the drafting of a report of the experiences of 250 women. The report is to be distributed to the Minister of Interior, politicians, media and local responsible people. In addition, a book including the stories of 20 women is to be published. Thus, the NGO attempts to make their work transparent and therefore also measurable while at the same time indeed putting some pressure on politicians. The organization aims to empower women by publishing a handbook.

Whereas women’s rights NGOs have received funding before, the rights of refugees have only recently come on the agenda of the EU funding. Miyılteci-Der, founded in 2008, is one of the refugee NGOs supported by the EIDHR, helping refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Turkey. On the one hand, Miyılteci-Der provides them with basic needs such as food, clothes, health and accommodation as well as with legal advice, psychosocial and administrative help for dealing with public agencies. On the other hand, the organization lobbies for the rights of the refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and wants to increase awareness in national and international institutions. Generally, the NGO cooperates with a wide range of human rights organizations including the Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly, Amnesty International and Mazlum-Der, a human rights NGO with Islamic roots.
The EIDHR-supported project, ‘Civil Act for Refugee Rights Emancipation’, aims to increase awareness and working together in the area of refugee rights and provide more and better support for refugees and asylum seekers. The project is carried out in the Turkish cities of Hatay, Ağrı, Isparta and İzmir. Here, the NGO trains civil society, activists and lawyers to provide financial and administrative support for women. Thus, the NGO tries to provide services needed by refugees, the target group, and empower the people in need in turn. In addition, the project plans to develop a network and online platform for civil society, activists and lawyers and create a website about its work.\footnote{Hanna Mühlenhoff} Thus, this is the visible outcome with which the completion and also the success of their work can be evaluated.

Both NGOs Mor Çatti and Mülteci-Der provide those in need with help and information and focus on enabling those in need to take responsibility for their own lives. Pressure on politics might only be exercised through distributing reports and publications.

\textit{Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfı} (Community Volunteers Foundation) (TOG) is a foundation founded in 2002 that appears to have even more strongly internalized the idea of empowering individuals just as suggested by the neo-liberal governmentality in the EIDHR programmes. The TOG implements ‘projects and trainings that empower Youth’,\footnote{Hanna Mühlenhoff} in line with the EU’s aim of empowering civil society. The EIDHR-funded ‘Youth Campus for Human Rights’ project also aims to enable young people to implement ‘human rights advocacy’ by improving their knowledge about ‘human rights advocacy and networking’ and creating a curricula for human rights advocacy training.\footnote{Hanna Mühlenhoff} Thus, the NGO is mostly concerned with shaping and enabling the individual to be self-responsible in promoting human rights. Thus, the responsibility to promote liberal norms is here given to the individual. Individual self-responsibility is characteristic of neo-liberalism in which the state becomes less responsible for regulation.

These examples illustrate that the projects funded by the EIDHR all aim to empower people and provide services and advice to their target group but also create a certain visible output in order to make their work measurable in a way. I argue that it is the neo-liberal rationalities of the EIDHR that constitute the NGOs’ work in this specific way. Nevertheless, the NGOs do support a broad liberal narrative addressing the individual and might also be successful in socializing individuals through these liberal values. Yet, while the NGOs do reach out to the individual level, the broader political level is addressed more carefully and the priority lies on providing services. This liberal narrative has little potential to threaten the dominant discursive struggle between a Kemalist narrative and a pro-Islam narrative as the NGOs work technically focusing on service provision instead of political involvement. Changing the discursive hegemony is even more unlikely in the changing political landscape of Turkey. As a person working for an important human rights NGO in Turkey said in an interview, before 2008 the AKP had been responsive to civil society organization but since 2008, ‘you can speak, but no one really cares; they do not suppress us but they also don’t care’.\footnote{Hanna Mühlenhoff} Thus, the AKP lets NGOs do their work but not much more.

While up to the middle of the last decade the AKP pursued a liberal Islamic narrative trying to integrate different groups of society,\footnote{Hanna Mühlenhoff} in the past years the AKP's
discourse has become more ‘Islamic’ and turned to what Jenny White\textsuperscript{117} calls ‘Muslim nationalism’. While the AKP welcomes the neo-liberal conception of civil society as self-responsible service providers and to a lesser extent also as advisors,\textsuperscript{118} it just absorbs the liberal discourse of the NGOs. Thus, challenging the discursive hegemony is difficult for the NGOs for three reasons stemming on the one hand from the neo-liberal nature of the EU support and on the other hand from the domestic context.

Firstly, following a reformist strategy, the EU’s neo-liberal governmentality depoliticizes the NGOs funded and the issues they are concerned about. NGOs are supposed to work on their issues in a technical way. This in turn takes their topics away from political contestation. The neo-liberal rationalities encourage the NGOs to compete for funding, to focus on service provision and empowerment of individuals instead of constituting civil society as a political actor opposing hegemonic narratives.

Secondly, in the last decade the AKP has continued the neo-liberal restructuring of the Turkish economy and welfare state\textsuperscript{119} and thus welcomes the conception of NGOs as service providers\textsuperscript{120} but cares to a lesser extent about what they have to say about individual rights.

Thirdly, the re-emerging hegemonic struggle between the Kemalist and Islamic narratives will make it more difficult for the liberal narrative to pose a challenge to this divide. Moreover, neo-liberal type NGOs constituted as service providers and advisors for individuals are not strong enough to oppose the struggle between these two narratives. Their liberal narrative is absorbed by this hegemonic struggle. At best, the NGOs’ liberal discourse will feed into the most dominant pro-Islam narrative in the future and makes it more liberal again.

Conclusions

In this paper, I argued for a more differentiated analysis of EU civil society funding and its underlying conceptions. I criticized that donors still assume that civil society and NGOs both fulfil the same functions for democracy; that NGOs are generally good; and civil society and the state oppose each other. Instead, I suggested an analysis of EU civil society programmes in Turkey that analyse what the EU actually does do in terms of a discursive impact.

I introduced Foucault’s conception of neo-liberal governmentality and showed how the EIDHR documents of the funding rounds from 2007 until 2012 employ such a language of neo-liberal governmentality. Following that I presented the discursive concept of hegemony as suggested by Laclau and Mouffe. The analysis of the funding round of 2011 and the examples of NGOs funded demonstrated how the EU’s neo-liberal governmentality translates in the projects of the NGOs by focusing on empowering individuals, providing services and making their work accountable. Yet, the article also suggests that the EU indeed supports NGOs that engage in a liberal narrative.

Yet, civil society in the form of NGOs that rather become the providers of social and advisory services promoting the responsibility of the individual instead of stressing the responsibility of politics is not likely to challenge the hegemonic narrative struggles taking place in Turkey. While fostering neo-liberal reforms and
also conceiving NGOs as service providers, the Islamic narrative has re-entered a stronger struggle with the Kemalist narrative in the past years. In this domestic context, the dominant pro-Islam narrative of the AKP is not threatened by the liberal narrative of the NGOs but absorbs it. Yet, which influence the liberal narrative of the NGOs will have in the future also depends on whether the discursive polarization in Turkey will further intensify or not. With decreasing discursive opposition, the AKP might re-incorporate the liberal discourse strengthening the liberal elements of the pro-Islam narrative again.

Notes

[14] Ibid., pp. 8–9.


[22] Salamon and Anheier, op. cit., p. 64.


[27] Kurki, op. cit.


[33] Foucault, op. cit., p. 793.

[34] Kurki, op. cit.


[37] Lemke, op. cit.

[38] Ibid.; *Foucault et al.*, op. cit., lecture 9.


[41] Ibid., p. 296.


[51] Ibid., p. 203.


[69] Ibid., p. 8.
[70] Ibid., p. 7.
[71] Ibid., p. 18.
[73] Ibid., p. 15.
[74] Ibid., pp. 16, 18.
[75] Ibid., p. 19.
[77] Kuzmanovic, op. cit.
[79] Ibid., p. 244.
[80] Ibid.
[82] Ibid., p. xi.
[83] Ibid., pp. 111–112.
[84] Ibid., pp. 1–5.
[102] EU Delegation, ‘Grant contracts awarded during December 2011. EIDHR—Turkey Programme Restricted Call for Proposals 2010’.
[105] Ibid.
[116] Çınar, op. cit.
[119] Önis, op. cit.
[120] Şen et al., op. cit., p. 251.

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