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Counter-hegemonic struggle and the framing practices of the anti-nuclear platform in Turkey (2002–2018)

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Abstract
Since winning its first electoral victory in 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has promoted nuclear energy as crucial for satisfying rising energy needs, triggering economic development and increasing competitiveness of Turkey. This hegemonic discourse has been challenged by the anti-nuclear platform (ANP) that has framed nuclear energy as posing a threat to human life and the nature. Based on an engagement between the framing perspective and the Gramscian approach, this study considers the framing activities of the ANP as a counter-hegemonic strategy to challenge the hegemonic discourses articulated by AKP on nuclear energy over the past 15 years. Analyzing the data from primary sources, such as reports, bulletins, pamphlets, and press releases produced by the ANP and interviews with ANP representatives, this study reveals the ways the platform exercises power through their framing practices and counter-hegemonic discourses to delegitimize the official frame promoting nuclear energy in Turkey.

Keywords
Counter-hegemony, framing, authoritarian neoliberal space, anti-nuclear platform, Turkey

Introduction

Nuclear energy has been one of the most contentious energy sources and has provoked highly active anti-nuclear groups, mobilizing in various spaces, at different scales around the

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world (Bernardi et al., 2018; Eschle, 2018; Kitschelt, 1986; Malin, 2015; Rucht, 1990). The project of establishing a nuclear power plant in Turkey was initiated in the mid-1970s and has been challenged by a collaborative network of environmental groups, unions, chambers, and opposition parties. Particularly after Turkey's most recent turn to nuclear energy in the mid-2000s under the AKP (Justice and Development Party) governments, the anti-nuclear platform (ANP), bringing varying identities and interests into a broader discursive framework of resistance and solidarity, has attempted to promote an alternative discourse that deconstructs nuclear energy as a threat for life space. As our interviews with ANP activists have revealed most activists understand nuclear power as a 'threat' and frame environmental injustice in political-economic terms, identifying the relations of domination and exploitation within the neoliberal transformation of the Turkish political economy since the 1980s. Organizing at the national level, the ANP has been one of the crucial actors of the recent environmental mobilizations that arose all over Turkey against the urban transformation policies, land grabs, and large-scale investment projects including mining activities, hydroelectric, nuclear, and thermal power plants (Adaman et al., 2019; Arsel et al., 2015; Erensü, 2016).

Revealing the trade-off between development and environment in Turkey, the Turkish Map of Environmental Justice identifies 150 nationally- and locally organized protests that challenge the adverse effects of such projects (Aydın, 2019: 4). Bergama and Cerattepe movements, for instance, emerged as strong resistance struggles against the extraction of gold using cyanide leaching processes that damage human-nature interaction (Çoban, 2004; Yaşın, 2019). Considering hydroelectric power plants as posing a threat to the streams and the ecological system, organizations such as the Protection of Loç Kanyon, the Streams Brotherhood Platform, and the Blacksea is Uprising campaigned against their construction (Erensü, 2016).

The proliferation of such resistance struggles has exposed the authoritarian neoliberal tendencies of the AKP governments that have used large-scale energy investments as socio-spatial interventions to accumulate political power (Erensü, 2016). The systemic exclusion of civil society actors from access to environmental decision-making processes, executive centralization, and the vigorous promotion of the capital accumulation process through coercive legal and administrative practices can be cited as major manifestations of the revitalization of the authoritarian neoliberal turn in Turkey (Tansel, 2018: 199–200). The 2013 Gezi Park movement which emerged as a reaction against that turn was a counter-hegemonic blow against the jeopardization of life space under authoritarian tendencies in Turkey (Bilgiç, 2018: 260).

The existing literature on environmental civil society organizations (CSOs) and movements in Turkey have assessed their organizational characteristics, mobilization strategies, and effectiveness in the neoliberal context of the post-1980s Turkey (Arsel, 2005; Kadirbeyoğlu et al., 2017), and have explored movement outcomes focusing on the reasons behind their successes or failures (Adaman et al., 2017; Özen, 2009). As far as the research on nuclear energy and the ANP are concerned, recent work has made a substantial contribution to the nuclear debate in Turkey. İşeri et al. (2018) has shown how competing discourse coalitions have engaged in producing an alternative truth on nuclear energy in Turkey. Akbulut et al. (2017) have demonstrated why the Turkish anti-nuclear movement has remained ineffective compared to other movements struggling against the establishment of hydroelectric and thermal power plants. Paker (2017) has highlighted the mobilization of the Turkish people as a counter-hegemonic struggle against the AKP governments' mega-projects used as tools for hegemony building, including Canal Istanbul, nuclear power plants, and mining projects.

The aim of this study is neither to assess the effectiveness of environmental CSOs (Kadirbeyoğlu et al., 2017) nor to evaluate whether the Turkish ANP has been successful as a counter-hegemonic movement or not (Adaman et al., 2017). The objective is to demonstrate how the Turkish ANP acting as organic intellectuals conducts its war of position in Gramscian terms to challenge hegemonic discourses on the nuclear issue by seeking to establish discursive frames that provide alternative meanings to nuclear energy.

This article contributes to the recent research on nuclear energy in Turkey in three main ways. First, by offering an engagement between the Gramscian approach and the framing perspective in social movement studies, this study considers the discursive framing strategies of the ANP as part of a counter-hegemonic struggle over how nuclear energy is understood in Turkey. Second, as articulated by Jessop (2005), a hegemonic project requires a spatial dimension to be successful. To understand how spatiality mattered in the anti-nuclear movement, this study has located the counter-hegemonic struggle of the ANP within the neoliberal space in which Turkish political economy and state-society relations have been embedded for the last forty years. Particularly, with the recent authoritarian neoliberal turn under the AKP governments, the article highlights how the ANP has been deeply embedded within the broader issues of production, redistribution, capital accumulation, and democratic participation in Turkey. Third, the article highlights the agency of organic intellectuals of the ANP in the Turkish context, which has been mostly absent in the literature on the ANP. It identifies the counter-hegemonic discourses they articulated to challenge the hegemonic nuclear discourse of the government.

The article also makes a contribution to the Gramscian literature on counter-hegemonic movements (Andree, 2011; Carroll, 2010; Carroll and Ratner, 1996; Karriem, 2009) by examining through an engagement between the Gramscian approach and the framing perspective how the counter-hegemonic struggle of the Turkish ANP is operationalized in practice. [AQ1] The analysis is further informed by an attention to the spatial constitution of counter-hegemonic struggles. Revealing how power is exerted by certain frame sponsors, framing is an essential component to any hegemonic or counter-hegemonic project (Carragee and Roefs, 2004: 228). Identifying who has a voice in defining the problem and the solution regarding nuclear energy, the framing perspective is useful in uncovering the discursive practices of the ANP to challenge the hegemonic frame and to motivate potential participants. Challenging hegemonic frames also necessarily involves a consideration of a spatial dimension as collective action takes place in spaces (Featherstone, 2003; Miller and Martin, 2000, 2003; Nicholls, 2009; Routledge, 2003), which are themselves (re)produced by political economic processes, social relations, and practices (Jessop, 2005). As strategic discursive representations of grievances and injustices, including proposed solutions to them, frames are constructed to appeal to certain audiences, targeting particular geographical scales. The emphasis on spatiality has revealed how the placement of the ANP in the Turkish authoritarian neoliberal space has shaped its discourses, strategies, and trajectory.

On method

This study aims to examine how the ANP challenges the hegemonic discourse of the AKP governments on nuclear energy, which is presented to the public as a necessary condition for Turkey's economic and technological development. As counter-hegemonic struggles are conducted through the process of framing that enables the construction of alternative meanings and representations, qualitative data has been collected by using the instruments of the qualitative methodology. To uncover how the ANP uses frames to delegitimize nuclear energy over the past 15 years, this study has analyzed the data retrieved from the research

reports, bulletins, and press releases produced by the ANP members, such as the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB), the Chamber of Electrical Engineers (EMO), and the Ecology Collective.

The Gramscian perspective considers such agents of counter-hegemonic discourse production and dissemination as organic intellectuals who have the potential to unite subaltern groups coming from diverse backgrounds. Gramscian methodology thus has required the analysis of the discourses produced by such influential members of the ANP to inform the public about debates around nuclear energy. In addition, the analyses of texts were complemented with semi-structured interviews with ten leading activists of the ANP. These interviews included several open-ended questions which were designed to reveal the activists' views with regards to the nuclear energy, environment, political-economic context, movement strategies, and goals.

In order to determine the frames constructed by the ANP, the texts and interviews were analyzed in the light of three questions: 1) What is the problem? What are its political, social and/or economic sources? (diagnostic frame); 2) What are the solutions offered to solve the problem? (prognostic frame); 3) What are the reasons provided to tackle the issue and thus engage in collective action? (motivational frame). The data was then classified into themes in accordance with recurring frames found in relevant discourses. Reflecting the way the platform frames its discourses against the nuclear energy initiative of the AKP governments over more than a decade, the texts and interviews have been crucial for revealing the content of the spatially-informed counter-hegemonic framing of the ANP. The analysis presented the key recurring themes through which the ANP frames and disseminates its oppositional claims against nuclear energy as 'the right to live and environmental justice frame', 'public accountability frame', and 'no to nuclear, yes to independence frame'. These frames appealing to nationwide audience have been crucial in challenging the priority given to economic development without considering social and environmental justice crucial for the defense of life spaces.

This study is composed of three parts. The first part deals with the main arguments of the Gramscian approach and the framing perspective, informed by the literature on the spatiality of social movements. The second part provides an overview of the neoliberal restructuring process of the Turkish economy as of the 1980s to emphasize the neoliberal space in which changing social relations of production in Turkey have privileged markets at the expense of ordinary citizens and the nature. The last part examines three counter-hegemonic frames employed by the ANP to challenge the hegemonic articulations of the AKP governments on nuclear energy.

Analyzing counter-hegemonic struggles: Gramsci, organic intellectuals and framing

The Gramscian approach

For Gramsci (1971), hegemony implies that the ruling elites try to consolidate their leadership position in economic, political and cultural realm by disseminating their own world view in such a way that generates the consent of subaltern groups. To understand how the ruling elites ensure that their world-view prevails throughout society, Gramsci (1971) offers a perception of the state as an integral entity that is based on two overlapping pillars, 'political society' and 'civil society'. The former rules through coercion, while the latter rules through consent. According to Gramsci (1971), benefiting from institutions including schools, unions, churches, and mass media, the state builds consent within civil society. Such

institutions guide civil society actors to align themselves in accordance with the dominant hegemonic values set by the ruling groups.

Nevertheless, Gramsci (1971) conceptualizes civil society not just a space where hegemony is created and maintained but also as an arena in which hegemony of the ruling groups is resisted. As hegemony is never fully secured, there is always the possibility of the emergence of confrontation and opposition to the existing status quo and its legitimacy among the masses. Conceiving politics as a complex plurality of contradictions and antagonisms, Gramsci (1971) argues that the hegemony of one group leads to counter-hegemonic efforts of others.

Considering civil society as an arena where counter-hegemony is created, Gramsci foresees the emergence of a collective will, composed of a variety of identities that can formulate an alternative social vision and common sense (Carroll, 2010: 174). For Gramsci (1971), common sense reflects the perception of the world in a noncritical and unconscious manner. Conceiving an organic link between hegemony and common sense, Gramsci (1971) asserts that the preeminence of a dominant group over subordinate groups reflects the former's capacity to persuade the latter to accept its worldview as legitimate and common sense. Although some aspects of dominant groups' common sense may lead to inequality or oppression and thus conflict with an individual's worldview, it still becomes highly engrained by subordinate groups as natural through socialization.

Gramsci (1971) stresses that although common sense serves as a powerful tool for elites to construct a structure from which they themselves benefit the most, subaltern groups can also use it to create their own alternative vision. For Gramsci (1971), to present a challenge to the hegemon, a subaltern group must demonstrate leadership by incorporating not only its own values but also those of other subaltern groups into an alternate vision of the society. Presenting common sense as something dynamic, constantly reconfiguring itself, Gramsci (1971) suggests that people can delegitimize and challenge hegemony by reconstructing alternative realities. For Gramsci (1971), that endeavor would require a long restructuring process, which he refers to as a war of position.

A war of position is a long-term strategy to build counter-hegemony. It entails the process of the creation of a new set of ideas and values through the subordinate groups' questioning of the dominant culture's values and discourses (Moen, 1998). The war of position is won not through a direct uprising or frontal assault on the power of the state, but through institutions of civil society. For Gramsci (1971), organic intellectuals are crucial in waging a war of position against hegemonic groups and their discourses. Conceiving organic intellectuals as shaping what can be thought and done by using their intellectual capacity, Gramsci (1971) argues that in a counter-hegemonic struggle, subaltern groups should produce their own intellectuals to organize resistance against hegemonic discourses within which policies are defined. He expects the weakening of the previous consensus/common sense once the counter-hegemony starts to dominate social values and norms (Gramsci, 1971). The key to this war of position led by organic intellectuals is constructing a new, alternative discourse that produces a new truth. This is where the framing approach in social movement studies comes into play.

Collective action frames, which convey meaning and therefore hold enormous power, are very effective discursive tools that both hegemonic and counterhegemonic forces use to (de) legitimize the established order. The ANP in Turkey seeks to construct a counter-hegemonic discourse so that new realities on nuclear energy can be uttered. It questions and redefines understandings of nature-society relations and the discourse of 'development'. Such an understanding of power and knowledge is crucial to reveal how the ANP can challenge the prevailing discourses on the nuclear energy by engaging in a war of position. As the

ANP claims to create alternative visions for living in a just and environmental-friendly society, it assumes a long-term struggle over meanings, over whose worldview will become accepted.

The framing perspective

Social movement scholars have used "framing" to study the ideational aspects of collective action, examining processes by which movements interpret political and social events and construct their messages (Snow et al., 1986; Snow and Benford, 1992). As sets of meanings attributed to individual and collective experiences, social situations and events, collective action frames perform three main tasks: identifying a social/political problem (*diagnostic*), presenting solutions to the problem identified (*prognostic*) and inviting potential supporters to engage in collective action (*motivational*) (Snow and Benford, 1988). These tasks enable movements to construct shared understandings, motives, and identities that encourage and legitimize collective action.

In their framing efforts movement organizers both draw on and modify existing cultural symbols and values and turn them into collective action frames, through which potential activists perceive their political environment (Tarrow, 1992: 190–192). Movements often adjust their frames to appeal to various audiences with different interests, values, and beliefs and to recruit participants (Benford and Snow, 2000: 630). This aspect of framing is crucial for elaborating on the role of the organic intellectuals that Gramsci claims to influence the way hegemony or counter-hegemony is organized by convincing the society to agree on or challenge certain policies, ideas, values, and beliefs.

Most work on frames analyzes how collective action frames are *strategically* used in the process of mobilization by movement entrepreneurs (Noakes and Johnston, 2005: 6). While acknowledging the strategic dimension of framing processes, this study also views collective action frames as part of 'the discursive politics of any struggle against established hegemony' (Carroll and Ratner, 1996: 411). Framing processes are discursive 'strategies' that the organic intellectuals of the ANP use to challenge the hegemonic articulations of AKP governments on nuclear energy, and thus to engage in 'counterhegemonic politics' (Carroll and Ratner, 1996).

It is also crucial to examine how political and social power shape framing processes by taking into account 'frame sponsorship, the resources available to sponsors, and how political and social contexts shape framing contests' among different actors, including activists, elites, and the media (Carragee and Roefs, 2004: 214–215). Yet, assymetries in power inevitably affect these framing contests over meanings and representations (Gamson and Wolfsfed, 1993: 116). Regarding material resources, for instance, political elites often have significant advantages over resource-poor movements, and, thus, the official frames that political elites advance have a greater chance of being successful (Noakes, 2005: 105).

While the work on framing processes provides a useful framework for uncovering the meaning-making practices of movements, it is necessary to situate these framing contests as well as social movements in context to uncover their spatial constitution. Only a few scholars have paid close attention to the global economic-political context to study social movements (Arrighi et al., 1989; Hetland and Goodwin, 2013). Offering a neo-Gramscian analysis, others have analyzed the way counter-hegemonic movements contest the prevailing economic-political order, its institutions and practices, which create and sustain injustice in different contexts (Carroll, 2010; Carroll and Ratner, 1996; Karriem, 2009). In further exploring the geographies of social movements, scholars have drawn from debates in geography, recognizing the now widely-accepted notion that 'the social' and 'the spatial' are

mutally constituted (Miller and Martin, 2000: 10). Adopting a 'relational' views of space, place, and scale, rather than fixed, pre-given 'territorial' notions (Nicholls, 2009), scholars have examined the ways space, place, and scale are implicated in the dynamics, practices, visions, and trajectories of movements. More specifically, they have explored how space, place, and scale shape the ways movements frame their grievances and claims, construct collective beliefs and identities, and mobilize potential participants (Featherstone, 2003, 2005; Kurtz, 2003; Leitner et al., 2008; Miller and Martin, 2003; Routledge, 2003). The spatiality of framing processes involve both the geographic targeting of frames and frame construction based on place-specific symbols, values, and meanings. As discursive representations of grievances and injustices, collective action frames are constructed to resonate with various audiences, thus targeting various geographical scales (Miller and Martin, 2000: 22–23) and drawing on and sometimes modifing place-specific cultural 'toolkits' (Swidler, 1986). 'Scale issues' are inherent in framing strategies as '[s]cale variations in political opportunity structures... may cause movements to emphasize decentralized struggle within local states or to focus on the central state' (Miller and Martin, 2000: 18). As discussed below, this is preciely the case with the ANP, which, situated in an authoritarian neoliberal space, has targeted the central government in Ankara.

The framing perspective is thus useful for analyzing the discursive aspects of social movements and strategic and spatial framing activities of movement entrepreneurs. This perspective combined with the Gramscian approach helps us better contextualize the framing practices of counter-hegemonic movements that contest the neoliberal project.

Understanding the authoritarian neoliberal space in Turkey

By reversing its state-led model of development into a market-based economy in 1980, Turkey has participated in the global neoliberal transformation process through a structural adjustment program known as the 24 January Decisions. As part of a stand-by agreement with the IMF (1980), Turkey adopted several austerity measures, including fiscal and monetary restraint, trade liberalization, deregulation of financial markets, export-promotion, wage reductions, and weakening agricultural subsidies (Öniş, 1998: 17). Such measures were smoothly implemented after the military take-over of the government in September 1980. Suppressing any opposition to the new economic model through the 1982 Constitution, the military regime (1980–1983) played a crucial role in transforming the social relations of production in the country in accordance with market principles (Tünay, 1993). By excluding organized labor from the political process, the military regime changed the balance of social forces in Turkey in favor of capital groups. The confinement of labor confederations coupled with the enactment of restrictive labor legislations led to a substantial fall in real wages which in turn contributed to the strategy of ensuring the international competitiveness of Turkish firms under export-oriented development model (Tünay, 1993).

The implementation of neoliberal reforms continued after a civilian government came to power in 1983 under the leadership of Turgut Özal, the designer of the 24 January Decisions. As a fierce supporter of market-based economy, Özal engaged in liberalizing trade, encouraging foreign direct investment, and initiating the privatization process (Öniş, 1998: 185). These measures played a crucial role in empowering certain social forces that supported the process of the integration of Turkish economy with global markets. Particularly, the generous tax incentives and export subsidies provided by the Özal government created more powerful export-oriented capital groups in Turkey. Perceiving their interests as embedded in neoliberal ideas, capital groups promoted neoliberal restructuring as necessary for economic development and welfare (Yalman, 2002).

To obtain the consent of the people for the new liberal economic order, the Özal government (1983–89) attempted to construct a new common sense by spreading liberal norms, including private ownership, competition, and maximization of self-interest to redefine the values and interests of Turkish people in line with market economy. Özal was particularly successful in delegitimizing alternative economic models by portraying them as leading to economic crises while promoting market economy as providing benefits to all (Yalman, 2002: 42).

The exposure of the Turkish economy to neoliberal policies for forty years made concepts such as competitiveness and integration with global markets prevail in the Turkish political economic agenda. Such discourses became decisive in the rise of the market-oriented Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power in November 2002. The neoliberal transformation of the Turkish economy strengthened with the AKP governments that implemented large scale privatization transactions, pursued fiscal and monetary restraint, restructured labor market, expanded availability of credits to larger population, and promoted foreign direct investment and speculative capital flows to achieve high growth rates. Although these policies resulted in high levels of household indebtness and jobless growth (Yeldan and Ünüvar, 2015: 3), AKP has kept on privileging economic growth, industrial development, deregulation of the energy sector, and heavy investments in infrastructure.

As part of its Vision 2023 development strategy, AKP announced the goal to make Turkey one of the top 10 largest economies in 2023. To achieve that target, economic activities in construction, real estate, and transportation increased considerably. The rise of sectors like iron, steel, and cement required heavy energy investments in hydropower, renewables, coal and nuclear energy. Energy entrepreneurs linked with the government began to be promoted by relaxing regulations on environmental governance, creating exemptions from certain rules, resorting to urgent expropriation procedures for land-grabs, and sidelining civil society (Erensü, 2016). To take the approval of the public for such controversial policies, the AKP appealed to the historical discourse of the rapid economic development as 'catching up with developed countries' has been a consistent objective since the foundation of the Turkish Republic (Adaman et al., 2017).

AKP has also used the coercive aspect of its hegemonic rule by centralizing more power at the the executive level while downsizing the supervisory role of the auditing and regulatory authorities. While the enaction of municipal laws of no. 5216 and no. 5393 seemed to empower local authorities and encourage the access of civil society organizations to municipal levels of governance, the central government kept on controlling the key decision-making process (Tansel, 2019: 325). For instance, when the then mayor of Mersin, in an attempt to prevent the construction of a nuclear power plant within its municipality drafted an environmental plan designating Akkuyu as a reforestation area, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization rejected it immediately and the Akkuyu nuclear project continued to be implemented in a top-down manner (Aydın, 2020: 10).

This neoliberal authoritarian space explains the government's pursuit of a primarily economic rationality that have led to the ignorance of the political, social, humanitarian, and environmental consequences of its neoliberal commitments. The AKP government's decision to pursue nuclear energy and the ANP's counter-hegemonic resistance to it should be understood within such a spatiality. Moreover, the exclusion of the local authorities from the decision-making process of the nuclear project explains why the ANP has been strongly mobilized at the national level targeting the Turkish state. The following part examines the nature of the ANP's struggle which constitutes a long process of war of position in Gramscian terms.

Uncovering the counter-hegemonic struggle of the anti-nuclear platform and its framing practices

The decisions in 1974 to establish a nuclear power plant in Akkuyu and in the early 1980s to build a second one in Sinop led to the emergence of local resistance groups to protest such commitments. Inspired by the French anti-nuclear movement, Arslan Eyce, the head of the Taşucu fishery cooperative, together with some journalists began to inform the local people about the risks of nuclear power plants in 1976. To raise awareness, they organized anti-nuclear conferences to circulate anti-nuclear ideas. Their activities not only attracted the attention of local civil society organizations but also national ones, including the Chamber of Electrical Engineers (EMO) and the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB) (Künar, 2002: 26–28).

The 1986 Chernobyl nuclear plant accident gave a boost to the anti-nuclear movement in Turkey. Several anti-nuclear groups composed of environmental movements, professional organizations, and trade unions engaged in street protests, signing petitions, organizing festivals and conferences to disseminate their counter-hegemonic discourses (EMO, 2013: 171–181, 2016: 131–156). They also established transnational connections and collaborated with Swedish civil society organizations to protest Swedish companies' interest in establishing a nuclear power plant in Turkey (Akbulut et al., 2017: 177). Moreover, Turkish rock bands, including Moğollar and Bulutsuzluk Özlemi, played an influential role in strengthening anti-nuclear activities through their performances (Künar, 2002). Several writers and caricature artists protested the establishment of nuclear power plants with their works (Künar, 2002: 61–65). Can Yücel, a famous poet and an active supporter of the ANP, wrote a poem titled 'Nation against babies that look like hormoned tomatoes'. Cartoonists such as Turhan Selçuk and Semih Balcıoğlu also contributed to the movement through their work in comics, including *Gırgır* and *Leman*.

In 1992, anti-nuclear groups began to publish the *Ağaçkakan Ecologist Journal*. Writing in this journal's January 1993 issue, Arif Künar (2002: 43), one of the most vocal members of the EMO, made a general call for all Turkish citizens to run an anti-nuclear campaign with a demand to stop nuclear power plants, stating that 'being active today is better than being radioactive tomorrow'. Various groups and organizations responded to this call in 1993 by founding the national anti-nuclear platform (ANP). Bringing together more than 90 civil society groups, including the TMMOB, the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), Greenpeace Mediterranean, and the Ecology Collective, the ANP has extended not only the base of the movement but also the scope of the protests. To increase awareness about the 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl accident and as part of the efforts to create alternative media platforms, the ANP issued the newspaper *Akkuyu Posta* for seven weeks. ANP activists also walked 4.500 km from İstanbul to Sinop, from Sinop to Akkuyu, and finally back to Istanbul. In order to tease the government's claim that nuclear opponents are 'reactionary', Özgür Gürbüz, one of the leading activists, walked 170 km 'backwards' from Silifke to Akkuyu (Kökkılıç and Aksakoğlu, 2007: 9–10).

Although the anti-nuclear movement in Turkey has historically been assertive at the national level, the ANP has taken steps to establish a space of contact between local and urban activists. To strengthen the local pillar of the movement, the ANP organized annual summer festivals in Akkuyu every August from 1994 to 2000. To consolidate relations of solidarity among local and urban groups, a house known as Green House (*Yeşil Ev*) was rented in 1997 in the Büyükeceli village where a nuclear power plant would be established. The local component of the movement, however, began to weaken after the then Ecevit government annulled the nuclear project in 2000. Thus, villagers both in Mersin

and Sinop, two cities where nuclear power plants are planned to be built, could not be effectively mobilized after the AKP government brought the project back to the agenda in the mid-2000s.

Moreover, both Mersin and Sinop-based anti-nuclear platforms, representing the urban and local dimension of the movement, were faced with divisions due to the over-politicization of their agenda by their radical left components. Such politicization coupled with the discursive assurances of the state-capital nexus regarding economic development and employment opportunities for the local population led to the dissolution of the mutual engagement among a broader rural and urban base of the ANP (Akbulut et al., 2017: 180–181). As modernization conceived in growth-oriented terms has historically constituted the basis of state-society relations in Turkey, the state's developmentalist discourse has served as an important spatial constraint for the ANP to maintain its social base of support, particularly at the local level. This is in line with the claim that 'pro-neoliberal activism' and cost–benefit analysis of individuals may lead them to privilege economic development and job opportunities at the expense of the environment (Malin and Alexis-Martin, 2019).

Spatial spots such as resistance tents, protest camps, and village coffee-houses serve as public spaces where shared values and collective identities sustaining movement mobilization are subject to continuous reconstruction (Eschle, 2018; Miller and Martin, 2000: 21–22). Akbulut et al. (2017: 183–184) attribute the weakening of rural-urban bonds in the Turkish anti-nuclear movement to the lack of such spatial spots, the closure of the Green House in 2000, and the discursive mobilization of the ANP around the threats and risks of nuclear energy rather than defending and reclaiming living spaces.

While acknowledging such an analysis, a Gramscian perspective considers the ANP to be organic intellectuals that not only mobilize against nuclear power plants due to their risks and threats, but also challenge them as part of a broader struggle against authoritarian neoliberal policies that displace associated forms of life (TMMOB, 2008a: 9–10). As will be analyzed below, given the centralized and authoritarian nature of the political regime in Turkey, the ANP has engaged in a war of position at the national level to promote three collective action frames in its texts and practices to protect the nature and the life space: 'the right to live and environmental justice frame', 'public accountability frame', 'no to nuclear, yes to independence frame' that present nuclear not as an energy source but as a threat to be tackled.

The right to live and environmental justice frame

As nuclear energy is closely connected to the issues of development, environment, and public health, the ANP has embedded its frames within the contested neoliberal transformation of the Turkish political economy that has privileged economic growth in accordance with market rationality since the 1980s. One of the main tasks identified by the ANP has been to confront the issues of growth and development that have long played a significant role in AKP's hegemonic discourse. The ANP has often highlighted that it is not against development or economic growth per se, but against the exclusion of the humanitarian and environmental aspects while designing projects for economic growth (EMO, 2013: 247). It has also suggested that AKP's framing of nuclear energy in terms of development conceals the contested aspects of nuclear power plants. For the ANP, while the state overemphasizes the achievements of nuclear energy, it remains silent on who bears the costs of nuclear energy production (EMO, 2013, 2016).

The ANP has claimed that after the restructuring of the electricity sector in the direction of the market pressure, electric energy has started to be seen as a market tool in Turkey (EMO, 2013: 185). Tayfun Görgün, the Secretary General of DİSK, highlighted that, '[t]he government

has already privatized and subcontracted everything, we will not allow more rent-seeking through nuclear power plants' (Hürriyet, 2011). In a press release, the EMO declared that:

> [O]ur country has become an open market for nuclear lobbies. Nuclear energy monopolies that came together in the International Nuclear Power Summit held in Istanbul on 8-9 March 2017 have been competing to win a share in the profitable nuclear energy market created in Turkey, the Middle East and Africa. (ANP, 2017) **[AQ2]**

Accusing the government for sacrificing human life for economic benefit, members of the ANP interviewed have warned that with the establishment of nuclear power plants, new profit opportunities will be created for the sake of the capital groups, but the ecosystem will be harmed and the human life will be threatened. For instance, an interviewee from Mersin ANP has stated that, '[c]ompanies present themselves as investment-friendly but ignore the impact of their operations on the environment and living conditions of people'. He has suggested that, '[r]ather than embarking on nuclear energy we need to design a new production-consumption pattern that respect both the nature and the right to live for the next generation of people" (interview, 14 October 2016).

Framing the anti-nuclear struggle of the ANP as an effort to promote an alternative production system with alternative resources, one of the vocal members of the ANP, the Ecology Collective (ekolojikolektifi.org), has put emphasis on altering the capitalist economic system that triggers too much energy consumption. For the Collective, nuclear programs exploit both nature and labor power (Erdem, 2011). The diagnostic framing employed by the Collective not only rejects nuclear energy but also identifies the relations of dominance and exploitation within the prevailing neoliberal development as the underlying causes of the problem. With such slogans as 'No to Nuclear, No to Capitalism', the Ecology Collective (2008) highlights that development does not benefit everyone: it brings progress for few but health and environmental burden for many. For the Collective (2011), an alternative, ecological society needs to be created in order to conceive alternative energy generation methods.

The ANP has promoted its justice claims by also pointing to the risks of nuclear energy for increasing the incidences of cancer and other important health problems (EMO, 2013: 187). By conveying the message that 'this problem concerns everyone, our life and nature are at stake', the ANP has made an urgent call for action to the Turkish people to defend their right to live and ensure environmental justice. By invoking potential accidents and the nuclear waste problem, all members of the ANP interviewed, have framed 'nuclear' in Turkey not in terms of 'energy' but in terms of 'threat' (interviews, 19 October 2016; 1 September 2016). Particularly, the nuclear waste has become a very important dimension to the justice framing of the ANP, which has presented nuclear waste management as the biggest risk concerning power generation (EMO, 2013, 2016). Aytuğ Atıcı, a parliamentarian from the Republican People's Party (CHP) and one of the most vocal supporters of the ANP, has accused the AKP government of endangering the lives of children in Mersin by opting for the nuclear threat instead of shifting to clean and renewable energy sources (interview, 19 December 2016).

Highlighting the harmful health effects of nuclear energy on children at a local site (Mersin) and its adverse health and environmental impacts on the entire nation, the ANP's right to live and environmental justice frame points to a linkage between the local and the national and locates the problem in the power of the decision-makers in Ankara who by inviting foreign nuclear companies to the country prevented more healthful opportunities for employment and economic development. Moreover, by constantly making references to previous accidents, most notably the Chernobyl (1986) and Fukushima (2011), the EMO (2013: 187) has attempted to delegitimize nuclear power. In press releases issued for

commemorating the anniversaries of the Fukushima and Chernobyl accidents, the ANP reminded the public about the death and large-scale radio-active contamination of the environment after these catastrophes (ANP, 2017a, 2017b).

A poll conducted in April 2013 revealed that the percentage of those who responded 'no' to nuclear energy in Turkey rose from 63.4% to about 80% after the Fukushima disaster (Citizens' Nuclear Information Center (CNIC), 2014). In protest campaigns and demonstrations, the ANP activists chanted slogans such as 'Akkuyu will not be another Chernobyl or Fukushima' and 'Neither thermal nor nuclear plants, solar and wind energy will be enough'. As the government has ignored such slogans and the decades-long struggle of anti-nuclear groups, the ANP has linked the environmental justice frame to the issue of democracy. Embarking on a public accountability frame, the ANP has invited the government to take into consideration the public opposition.

Public accountability frame

The ANP has framed the decision for the nuclear commitment in Turkey as a political choice formulated by the political elite in a non-transparent manner despite the reactions of the public at large (EMO, 2016: 147). Such criticisms have particularly increased after the government signed deals with Russian and Japanese companies for the construction of two nuclear reactors in Turkey (EMO, 2016: 50–52). Arguing that these agreements revealed the government's dismissal of public opinion, Özgür Gürbüz, an energy specialist and the member of the ANP, stated that:

> Neither Sinop citizens nor the people of Mersin have complete information about the content of these agreements. They are against the nuclear power plant but nobody cares about them. Where will the nuclear waste be stored? Who will inspect the power plants?... Nobody answers such questions. In taking a decision to build a nuclear power plant despite the will of the people, the government commits a crime against democracy. (CNIC, 2014)

The ANP has presented the failure of the government to safeguard the rights of citizens and to acknowledge the will of the people as the fulfilment of the desires of the rich and powerful rather than ordinary citizens. For instance, TMMOB (2016: 14) issued a press release, regarding the 23rd World Energy Congress held in Istanbul in 2016, criticizing the World Energy Council as well as the government for allowing the representatives of corporations to present their views on energy on behalf of private profit and at the expense of the CSOs representing the interests of the general public.

The ANP also challenged the curriculum of the Ministry of National Education on nuclear energy that was presented at schools as the only alternative for Turkey's energy strategy. The ANP criticized the authorities' ignorance of the public support given to the online signature campaign organized by Greenpeace Mediterranean in 2015 coupled with the ANP Mersin's petition to the Ministry's Mersin branch to include information on alternative energy sources in the curriculum on nuclear energy and technology (Temocin, 2018: 368). Criticizing the lack of transparency and the exclusion of the public from the nuclear debates in Turkey, an interviewee from the Mersin ANP stated:

> People are fiercely against nuclear power plants, but politicians in Turkey tend to promote nuclear energy as a development issue and ignore the fact that the promise of development puts a heavy burden on the people and the nature. (interview, 14 October 2016)

Embarking on the public accountability frame, the ANP has also presented the government as a violator of environmental regulations (EMO, 2016: 93). The ANP has indicated how the AKP governments have made numerous changes in environmental legislation to enable construction, energy, and mining sectors to operate their activities without being scrutinized by public authorities (EMO, 2016). It has informed the public about the measures taken by the government such as opening nature conservation areas to mega-projects, abolishing the obligatory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reports for mining projects, and undermining supervision procedures concerning the use of forests, coasts and agricultural fields for tourism and/or construction purposes. Many environmental organizations filed lawsuits against the EIA report of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant, approved by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization in 2014, criticizing the legality and the scientific validity of the report (EMO, 2016: 67, 267–279).

The argument that there are inherent weaknesses in nuclear regulation has also become a lynchpin in the public accountability frame. More than 160 academicians have signed the 'The Scientists' Declaration against Nuclear Power Plant' and reacted against the lack of a definition for crime and punishment in the law for possible catastrophes, demanding a more stringent nuclear regulation (EMO, 2013: 245–253). Particularly, after the tragic death of 301 miners in the explosion at a coal mine in Soma in May 2014, the necessity of regulation and public safety measures has been strongly embedded within the anti-nuclear narrative. For the ANP, the Soma accident could have been prevented if the government and the Soma Holding, the private company running the mine, had considered public safety more seriously (EMO, 2016: 297). Establishing a parallelism between what happened in Soma mining disaster and nuclear risk, the ANP has put forward that operating nuclear power plants poses far greater risks because of the lack of tradition of accountability of policy-makers and insufficient infrastructure in Turkey.

No to nuclear, yes to independence frame

The ANP has asserted that the solution to concerns about meeting growing electricity demand and ensuring energy security is not nuclear energy. It has invoked the domestic capacity of the country to sustain its energy needs through renewable energy resources rather than costly nuclear power plants (EMO, 2013: 98). For Kamer Gülbeyaz, the president of the Mersin branch of EMO, 'Turkey has no need for nuclear power plants, which are expensive to found, produce, manage and keep safe, whose waste problem has not been solved' (Bianet, 2008). He suggested the sufficient use of country's renewable energy potential. To show the efficiency of alternative energy resources to the people living in the neighborhood of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant, Greenpeace installed solar panels on the mosque in Büyükeceli in 2010 (Temocin, 2018: 372).

To justify its framing of nuclear as unnecessary, the ANP has rejected the government's claim that nuclear energy production is cheap and depicted nuclear plants as the most expensive tools of energy generation due to high investment and maintenance costs (EMO, 2013: 105, 2016: 90, 108–109). Moreover, invoking the purchase guarantee agreement concluded with Russia, the ANP has asserted that, '[t]oday, the average electricity sales price is around 4–5 cents per kWh, thus the commitment to pay an average price of 12.35 US cents per kWh excluding VAT to Russia based on a 15-year power purchase agreement denies cheap energy claims of the government" (ANP, 2017b). Özgür Gürbüz (2017) has suggested that '[s]olar energy is cheaper. The price for the giant solar power plant to be built in Karapınar is almost half of the nuclear price: 6.9 cents. There are also opportunities for producing solar panels in Turkey'. This emphasis on cheaper renewable

resources that would enable Turkey to have access to both energy and technology transfer has been further elaborated by the economic independence framing.

As part of its counter-hegemonic strategy, the ANP has constructed its frames with reference to the national values that would resonate with Turkish people. As the concept of independence has been one of the most respected moral sources of Turkish society, the ANP has often framed its anti-nuclear rhetoric from an independence perspective. The ANP has constructed this motivational frame in its efforts to appeal to the public and recruit participants. The EMO (2013: 189; 2016: 90–91, 124–125) has claimed that, 'Turkey lacks the necessary energy resources that nuclear reactors need. Given the lack of capacity in Turkey to construct, run, and maintain nuclear power plants, coupled with the lack of enrichment facilities and enriched uranium, nuclear energy would increase Turkish dependence on foreigners.

Casting the problem of nuclear as a problem of national independence, ANP has aimed to invoke a national sentiment that would well extend beyond cities of Mersin and Sinop. The Chairman of the TMMOB, Mehmet Soğancı, has argued that, '[f]ormulating policies, which are imposed by the US, the EU, the IMF and the World Bank, the government has ignored the national interests and exposed people and the environment to threat under the pressures of nuclear lobbies' (TMMOB, 2008b: 12). Drawing parallels between the Ottoman capitulation treaties with European countries and the agreement Turkey signed with Japan in May 2015 for the construction of a nuclear power plant in Sinop, the ANP has refuted the government's claim that nuclear power plants would reduce Turkey's dependence on foreign resources. Instead, the ANP has argued that as the agreement has granted special privileges to Japan, signing it has amounted to surrendering country's independence (EMO, 2016: 103–105, 112). Thus, to contest the hegemonic narrative on nuclear power, the ANP has linked its anti-nuclear discourse to both its opposition to neoliberal capitalism and to the negative impact of operations of foreign corporations in Turkey on the country's independence.

Conclusion

This study has presented the counter-hegemonic struggle of the ANP in Turkey against the hegemonic discourse of the AKP governments that have promoted nuclear power as a must for ensuring economic growth and competitiveness of the country over the last 15 years. Based on a theoretical engagement between a Gramscian framework and the framing perspective in social movement studies, further informed by scholarship on the spatiality of counter-hegemonic struggles, the study has showed how the ANP has acted as organic intellectuals that sought to replace the prevailing discourse on nuclear energy with an alternative discourse that framed it as a threat. By examining the discursive struggle of the ANP to deconstruct the official discourse, the study reveals how a hegemonic discourse can be contested by the texts and practices of counter-hegemonic movements in an authoritarian neoliberal space, which informs their narratives, visions, strategies, and trajectories.

For Gramsci (1971), in order to transform the meanings associated with the prevailing discourses constructed by hegemonic powers, subordinate groups must use organic intellectuals that can create and disseminate alternative meanings and representations to prepare the ground for the naturalization of new realities. This study has accordingly showed that the ANP, acting as organic intellectuals, has conducted its counter-hegemonic struggle by using its frames as critical tools of social contestation. It has highlighted that the ANP has used framing as a discursive strategy to produce and disseminate alternative narratives that call attention to injustice and its political-economic sources, challenge and redefine existing hierarchies of knowledge on nuclear energy and nature-society relations. This study has thus

revealed that framing, both as a process through which the perspectives of certain groups are produced, and also as the practice of questioning and confronting power, can be a useful tool in a counter-hegemonic struggle.

The analysis of the ANP's framing strategies reveals that the diagnostic and prognostic frames of the ANP presented to the public a new interpretation of nuclear energy. These frames have challenged the promotion of nuclear energy as a neutral and positive process bringing equal benefits to everyone without paying due attention to its social or environmental consequences or without taking the will of the people into account. By highlighting the ethical dimensions of the nuclear issue, the ANP has not only revealed the antagonism in the hegemonic discourse of the AKP government, but also framed its messages in a way that would easily resonate with the values of the public. As the concept of independence has been one of the most respected moral sources of Turkish society, the ANP has often made use of the independence frame to appeal to the Turkish public.

Another related finding of this study is that a recurring critique of the neoliberal transformation of the Turkish economy and its economic growth dynamics has constituted the wider context the ANP has conducted its counter-hegemonic struggle. The study has emphasized how the ANP, situated in an authoritarian neoliberal space, has based and shaped its framing practices on the political-economic structures in Turkey to resist the nuclear project that is primarily governed by economic rationality at the expense of humanitarian and environmental costs. It has presented the counter-hegemonic resistance of the ANP as embedded within the contested neoliberal transformation of the Turkish political economy that has produced a shared perception of alienation, marginalization, and disempowerment.

This study has identified the decades-long anti-nuclear resistance of the ANP as a war of position conducted for the construction of alternative visions for an ecologically sustainable and socially-just society. It has demonstrated that by mobilizing the people to reconstruct the common sense on development or economic growth in Turkey in a humanistic and ecological manner, the ANP not only has rejected nuclear energy per se but also relations of dominance and exploitation within the prevailing development approaches in Turkey. This finding is important to understand how certain frames constructed by social movements may contain the potential to resist and to redefine the ways that development has been defined and carried out. It is equally crucial to reveal the potential for civil society groups to make their alternative policy proposals and discursive representations part of the official decision-making process.

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