

“NOT TO CRITICIZE; BUT TO CHANGE”:
HOW A NGO IN TURKEY CONSTRUCTS BOUNDARIES BETWEEN
POLITICS AND VOLUNTEERISM

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ESRA DABAĞCI

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Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

Prof. Dr. Ayşe Saktanber
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

Prof. Dr. Sabine Strasser
Co-Supervisor

Assist. Prof. Dr. Aykan Erdemir
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Prof. Dr. Hayriye Erbaş (A.U., SOC): _____

Prof. Dr. Sabine Strasser (UNI. WIEN., KSA): _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Feryal Turan (A.U., SOC): _____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Aykan Erdemir (METU, SOC): _____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut Beşpınar (METU, SOC): _____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name: Esra Dabađcı

Signature :

ABSTRACT

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Dabağcı, Esra

M.S., Department of Sociology

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Aykan Erdemir

Co-Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Sabine Strasser

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This thesis mainly aims to understand how the realms of “the political” and “non-political” are comprehended, defined and differentiated on the practice of volunteerism in civil society. This study is based on an ethnographic research conducted with people who are volunteering in a Non-Governmental Organization in Turkey working in the field of education. The data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation by following the volunteers who regularly visit the elementary schools in villages and *Yatılı İlköğretim Bölge Okulları* (Regional Boarding Elementary Schools) in order to help school children. Volunteers’ strong emphasis on the construction of volunteer activity and political activity as opposing categories and their strategies and rules conducted for avoiding any political representation, their perception of politics as “spoiled” and useless and responsabilizing themselves for their target group constituted the grounds of this study. Basing on the data and following the Foucauldian concept of governmentality; it is argued that the idea “non-politics” is a new type of politics which is experienced in late liberalism. By prioritizing “how” questions, this study discusses how volunteerism and politics are defined and how individuals feel responsible for the tasks which were previously seen as duties of state.

Keywords: Volunteerism, NGOs, Governmentality, Non-politics, Civil Society, Political Anthropology

ÖZ

ELEŞTİRMEK İÇİN DEĞİL; DEĞİŞTİRMEK İÇİN:
TÜRKİYE’DE BİR STK’NIN “SİYASET” VE “GÖNÜLLÜLÜK”
AYRIMINI ÜRETME SÜRECİ ÜZERİNE

Dabağcı, Esra

Yüksek Lisans, Sosyoloji Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Aykan Erdemir

Ortak Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Sabine Strasser

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Bu tez temel olarak “siyasal olan” ve “siyasal olmayan”ın nasıl kavrandığını, tanımlandığını ve ayrıştırıldığını sivil toplumdaki gönüllülük pratiği özelinde anlamayı hedeflemektedir. Bu çalışma Türkiye’de eğitim alanında faaliyet gösteren bir Sivil Toplum Kuruluşunda gönüllü olarak çalışan insanlarla gerçekleştirilen etnografik bir araştırmaya dayanmaktadır. Veriler derinlemesine görüşme ve katımlı gözlem metotlarıyla toplanmıştır. Katımlı gözlem, köylerdeki ilköğretim okulları ve Yatılı İlköğretim Bölge Okulları’nda eğitimini sürdüren çocuklara yardım etmek için bu okulları düzenli olarak ziyaret eden gönüllüleri gittikleri her yerde “takip ederek” ve yapılan etkinliklere katılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Gönüllülerin, gönüllülük pratiği ile siyaseti zıt kategoriler olarak inşa etmeleri; her hangi bir siyasal temsilden kaçınmak için kullandıkları stratejiler ve uyguladıkları kurallar; siyaseti gereksiz ve kirli bir alan olarak tanımlamaları ve kendilerini hedef kitleleri, köy çocuklarına, karşı sorumluluklandırmaları bu çalışmanın temel bulguları olduğu söylenebilir. Toplanan verilerden ve Foucault’nun “yönetimsellik” kavramından hareketle, “siyasal olmama” fikrinin geç liberalizmle deneyimlenen yeni bir siyaset biçimi olduğu ileri sürülmektedir. Bu çalışma “nasıl” sorusuna öncelik vererek, siyasetin ve gönüllülüğün nasıl tanımlandığını ve bireylerin önceden devlete ait olarak görülen görevlere karşı kendilerini nasıl sorumluluklandırdıkları tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Gönüllülük, STK’lar, Yönetimsellik, Siyaset dışı alan, Sivil Toplum, Siyasal Antropoloji

*To my mother and father,
Zennure & Nazım DABAĞCI*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Problem

It was December 22, 2009. I was in a foyer of a concert hall waiting for a solo performance of *Sunay Akın* who is a popular poet, writer and a modern story-teller. There were lots of people standing in long lines just front of doors of the hall. Many photographs were hanged on the white boards, which were located just near the crowd, possibly to turn the crowd's attention. In the photographs, there were children in primary school uniforms. With a close look, one can easily realize that hairs of some children were not brushed; their clothes were old and not tidy. They were photographed while laughing, chatting, and playing; and all seemed to be very happy. Besides children, there were some young men and women at their early twenties in causal clothes and a man at fifties who were photographed while hugging the children.

Meanwhile, the doors were opened, the crowd started to enter into the hall. On the ticket of the event, it was written that "Sunay Akın this time tells his stories for the children of [FARPS]"¹”² Thus, everyone in the hall knew that the event was organized to donate the incomes to a foundation named FARPS.

People sat, lights were turned off, and a young woman in black suit saluted the audience. She introduced the foundation and gave her floor to head of the foundation who was one of the figures I saw on the photographs. He started his speech explaining their aim and activities, accompanied by slights of children's photographs:

¹ It is a pseudonymous name which I will use throughout the thesis in order to address this non-governmental organization (NGO).

² "Sunay Akın bu kez hikayelerini [FARPS'ın] çocukları için söyleyecek."

These children have tried to continue their education away from their mothers and fathers as boarding students, since they were six years old. They are children of *YİBO* [*Yatılı İlköğretim Bölge Okulları* (Regional Elementary Boarding Schools)] and we, as FARPS, are working for their education and success. [...] We are supported by everyone, because we have no political agenda. All we have done is about being human, possessing humanistic values.³

After this introduction, he continued his speech by referring the photographs and children's manuscripts projected on the screen. These were letters sent to people in FARPS. Some of them were full of grammatical mistakes that made the audience smile. While reading the letter one by one, he also explained that these were the first letters of children who have just learnt how to read and write. The audiences were affected by these words, which I could understand from the responses of people near me. He continued:

We go to *YİBO*s, we go to the village schools and we "touch" the children. We try to teach them the importance of the scientific curiosity. We read fairytales to them before they sleep. It would be the first time in their life that someone read a fairytale for them. We are taking so many letters that... If you ask what life means, what is happiness, what is love; I would say here it is, it is in these letters...⁴

After he ended up his speech, a young woman, looking at the paper in her hands, appeared on the stage for making her speech,. She started by introducing the organization in her way:

What do [FARPS] volunteers do? It does something for village children. What's more, it does this without getting involved in politics. [...] Village children are surrounded by ignorance and poverty. [...] We tell village children that 'you can

³ "Bu çocuklar altı yaşından beri anneleri ve babalarından uzak yatılı okuyorlar. Onlar *YİBO* çocukları, ve biz [FARPS] olarak onların okuması ve çok başarılı olmaları için çalışıyoruz. [...] Herkesten destek görüyoruz, çünkü politikayla ilgilenmiyoruz. Yaptığımız her şey insan olmakla ilgili, insani değerleri sahip olmakla ilgili."

⁴ "YİBO'lara gidiyoruz, köy okullarına gidiyoruz. Çocuklara "dokunuyoruz". Çocuklara bilimsel merakın önemini öğretmeye çalışıyoruz. Çocuklara uyumadan önce masallar okuyoruz. Hayatlarında ilk kez birisi onlara masal okumuş oluyor. O kadar çok mektup alıyoruz ki... Hayatın anlamı nedir, mutluluk nedir, sevgi nedir diye sorarsanız, işte burada, bu mektuplarda derim."

do it, it won't be easy and you have to study very hard, but you can do it, you can achieve it'. We talked about book, knowledge and future. [...] You can also do something. Without only feeling discomfort or criticizing, you can do something, you can change something.⁵

These words are taken from members of a volunteer organization which incorporates a foundation, student clubs and networks in three different universities in Turkey. This thesis is about the content and concepts that both volunteers used above while defining their agenda and offering some solutions. My aim is to understand how volunteerism is perceived and conceptualized through the relations and boundaries among volunteerism, "the political" and "the non political". In other words, I intend to explore the meaning of volunteer practice and whether it is a distinct category from the notion of "the political" and if so how it is differentiated from "the political", and how conceptual boundaries between "the political" and "the non political" is drawn and identified, in the case of this organization.

Before formulating the research and setting up a research field and agenda, the motive prompt me to do the study is my curiosity about how people understand, shape, rationalize, legitimize and perceive the state and "the political" in everyday life. Ethnographic perspective usually focused on the "other"s of the "routine" which can be considered as resistance, "resistance to power; resistance to colonialism, resistance to the nation-state" (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 129). It is often assumed that what is perceived as "the political" required a definition, however what is defined as "the non political" has taken fewer attention (Eliasoph 1998: 6). The interest concerning the penetration of the politics which is "routine", "legitimate" and supported in daily life will constitute the grounds of inquiry.

Ethnography of the "majority" necessitates a ground on which research, analysis and writing practice stand. I tried to search the meaning of "the political" and how it is synchronized with "non political" within the context of volunteerism and NGOs,

⁵ "[FARPS]'ın gönüllüleri ne yapar? Köy çocukları için bir şeyler yapar. Üstelik bunu siyasete hiç bulaşmadan yapar. [...] Köy çocukları ailelerdeki cehaletle yoksullukla kuşatılmış. [...] Biz köy çocuklarına 'yapabilirsin, kolay olmayacak çok çalışman gerekecek ama yapabilirsin, başarabilirsin' deriz. Kitap, bilgi, gelecek deriz. [...] Siz de bir şeyler yapabilirsiniz. Sadece rahatsızlık duymayıp, sadece eleştirmeyip, bir şeyler yapabilirsiniz, bir şeyleri değiştirebilirsiniz."

which is not peculiar to the particular case of this study. In the discourse of Rio Conference of 1992, which gathered representatives from over 9000 organizations from 171 countries, had a general sense on NGOs based on the idea of “doing good” and untainted by the politics of government and market (Zivetz 1991; cited in Fisher 1997: 442). The idea of “sterilizing” from “the political” becomes a widespread argument, if volunteer activity is the subjects of speeches. It is also valid for the perceptions and ideas of the volunteers of FARPS.

The organization which is the main locale of the research incorporates a foundation, three student clubs and a unit and networks in three universities in Turkey. The target group of the organization⁶ is *köy çocukları* (village children) –primarily- the ones getting their formal in education in *YİBOs* and the ones in state primary schools located in villages of Turkey. Core activity of the organization is to visit village children in boarding schools and village schools in different parts of Turkey, once a month at weekends and at semester and summer vacations. Each visit is considered as a “project” in which they do educational activities⁷; organize presentations to children and teachers; donate books to libraries of the schools and to each children; chat and play various games with children in time remained from the activities and presentations. At the end of the day, volunteers, most of whom are students, stay in the dormitories of *YİBOs* with the children and read them a fairy tale before they go to sleep. Very early in the following day, they leave the schools to visit another one. They also invite some children and their teachers that they find “successful” during the projects to their university campuses and organize activities for children invited from the schools they visited.

In this study, I intend to focus on the ideas, individuals, practices and strategies within a NGO. In simplest sense of the words, I am looking for the answer of the questions what is volunteerism, what is “the political” and “non political” and on

⁶ I will use the term “organization” to refer the foundation, student clubs and the units in the universities related to activities of the group.

⁷ Activities are courses that the children are lectured by the volunteers instead of their teacher on the visiting day. They are different than the courses of official curriculum, which are designed by academicians and some experts. I will explain the activities detailed in subsequent chapters.

what grounds these are related or not related and what are their strategies and negotiations while talking and representing themselves to other people and institutions through these categories. The inquiry will be based on their ideas and perceptions together with their practices in order to explore what these practices mean for them and to what extent it is influential in shaping their perceptions. In other words, this study stands on the “micro-politics” (Fisher 1997: 454) of a volunteer NGO that I see as an “area within which battles from society at large are internalized” (Clarke 1996: 5, cited in *ibid*: 449).

1.2 Research Process and Methodology

This thesis is an ethnographic study which based on a field research conducted between late December, 2009 and late May, 2010. During five months time, I observed and participated in the volunteer activities of the organization and did thirteen interviews.

What makes a study (and this study) ethnographic does not hinge on just the procedures of participant observation or taking field notes. In other words, doing ethnography is not just a matter of method composed of peculiar instruments, procedures and techniques while collecting data (Geertz, 2000[1973]: 6). The term, “ethnography”, refers both “the *process* to be carried out (through fieldwork and collecting data for presentation) and the *product* of the fieldwork –the presentation itself (Wolcott, 2001[1990]: 52). Thus “a claim to be “doing ethnography” is also a proclamation of intent” (*ibid*).

Geertz (2000[1973]: 6-9) defines the ethnographic enterprise as “thick description” through which ethnographers make their own constructions of other people’s constructions or reflect their thinking of other people’s thoughts. He (*ibid*: 5) takes “culture to be ... webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore ... an interpretive [science] in search for meaning.” So, ethnography presents a way of seeing on how to approach, comprehend, research, analyse, reflect and write on social phenomenon. Ethnographers either generate meanings from *emic* categories, through informants’ own words or perspectives or present *etic* perspective through researchers’ own

analytical concepts and categories. However in both cases, ethnographers' aim is to *interpret* not just to *explain* how their informants organize their lives and daily routines communicate with others, what they expect from others, and how they deal with forces within and beyond their control (Wolcott, 2001[1990]: 55). These issues are collected through *process* of ethnography and they become apparent in the *product* of ethnography basing on ethnographers' own selection of details. For Wolcott (62-63), other qualitative research techniques have hypothesis-generating capacity beginning from the early stages of problem definition. Conducted by ethnographers as well, interviews provide "targeted" data by asking particular but open ended questions (Hoey, internet source). Basing on just interviews which vary in style, necessities more pre-defined and targeted research agenda, exclude seeing and thus interpreting the daily routines and practices. However this does not mean that analytical and practical means of other styles, techniques and methodologies in social sciences have confined capacity to analyse social phenomenon, compared to ethnography. They have different perspectives which necessitate different procedures of collecting and analyzing knowledge. Since "a way of seeing is always a way of not seeing" (Burke, 1935: 70; cited in Wolcott, 2001[1990]: 55), quantitative research and other qualitative data collection and analysis approaches achieve to see what ethnography can not, and vice versa.

My focus is "webs of meanings" of volunteers (of a NGO working in field of education) on generally how they perceive and analyse the world, themselves and others; and on particularly how they understand, define and conceptualize volunteerism and "the political" and "non political". I tried to explore these meanings and categories through their ideas and practices. In other words I intend to do is to figure out what is embedded in daily routines and practices which can not be interpreted just though the act of asking their ideas but through participating and observing their experiences and practices.

1.2.1 Data Collection

During the research process, I worked with the volunteers and prepared packages of books, games, gifts and educational equipments using in activities to get prepared

for the projects in a depot of the student club, located in the university where the activities are directed. Besides, I participated in volunteer projects (visits to schools), which is the core activity of the organization, both as a researcher and a volunteer whom was expected to do an educational activity and other works such as helping other volunteers. First volunteer project, I had participated lasted fifteen days and conducted in sixteen *YİBO*s mostly located in districts of many provinces that are respectively *Şırnak, Mardin, Şanlıurfa, Kilis, Hatay, Osmaniye, Adana* and *Ankara*. I continued field study by being a volunteer at projects organized at weekends, each of which had lasted two days and were held in the boarding schools of the provinces, *Sivas, Çorum* and *Muş*. Throughout the time I spent in schools, in dormitories and in bus while they were on the way to schools and returning and, I interacted with volunteers, children and school staffs; tried to observe volunteers' activities and interactions among volunteers, between them and children and school staff; tried to help volunteers for organization of their work; and spent time with them from early in the morning until the time they sleep in the dormitories. During the breaks and the time before and after the activities, I had the chance to have conversation with many volunteers and ask their thoughts and feelings about teachers, schools, children or the place we had visited; about their practice and sometimes about specific events and situations we had been experiencing.

Beside these, I participated in meetings organized before projects and meetings organized by foundation or student club. One of these was celebration of tenth year anniversary of their projects which lasted two days and was held in *Mersin*. After working with volunteers in the depot, I talked with them while we were having our lunch or drinking tea.

Moreover I made semi-structured deep interviews, starting just after the first project which lasted fifteen days. Since I have prior knowledge about the field, people and the setting, I purposefully select groups of informants and sometimes informants offered me some specific people in accordance with the knowledge that I asked for. The informants are academicians, most of whom are leading positions in the organization; graduate volunteers who had volunteered throughout the undergraduate years and undergraduate students who have been doing this activity for two or more than two years and undergraduate students at their first year in

university and have volunteered for less than one year. My aim in classifying the interviews is to get the difference in thoughts, feelings and experiences because I observed in the field that the ones who were more experienced compared the schools and places they visit and knew the milieu in which they did volunteer activities, and had lots of idea about their target group, in their term “village children”. On the other hand, the ones who have recently joined the group had many impressions and observations and strong feelings about their first experience and compared their own childhoods with the ones they encountered, more than the other volunteers. In other words, their practice and experience have a considerable impact on their thoughts, feelings, and views about many political and social issues and debates in society that mostly defined as *Türkiye'nin gerçekleri* (facts of Turkey). Several volunteers state that they learn these “facts” through their volunteer projects. For this reason how they narrate their experience and on what bases the narrations are differentiated were important factors for me in interviews.

I asked questions about their life stories including childhoods, their families, schools where they live; their university life, friends, activities; their practice, motives, experience and feelings when they are volunteering; about the organization and its particular practices; their perception of children, parents, teacher, people, schools, places where they visit; and about how they define the practice of volunteerism. I asked descriptive and open ended questions, letting them free by not intervening while they were narrating and expressing their feeling. Just for the last group of questions, I made comparisons with other institutions, international and nation-wide NGOs and student activist groups.

1.2.2 Boarding Schools as a Research Site

This study was not conducted in a single site but in multiple sites⁸, because I followed the volunteers and tried to observe them in every place where they went.

⁸ Since I conduct the fieldwork in multi-sites and with many different people in every volunteer projects, this study may be considered as having “multi-sited methodology” features to a certain extend. Suggesting multiple sites in ethnographic investigation, Marcus (1995: 98) declares that, the

These sites were mostly the boarding schools in various provinces. On the one hand each places where I followed volunteers -twenty-one schools in eleven provinces- were seemed to be as one site at first sight, since they are all boarding elementary schools whose architectural design were even almost identical. On the other hand the sites were differing from each other, because the people, teachers, staffs, children, locals, cultures and even the language were diverse. Seeming to have variety of actors and sites, this study just focuses on a group of people volunteering in a single NGO and observing their volunteer practice based on the interactions with other actors, teachers and children in boarding schools for whom volunteers visit to help.

The boarding schools, namely *YİBOs* are founded in accordance with the 25th article of law numbered, 1739, *Milli Eğitim Temel Yasası* (Fundamental Law of National Education) and 9th article of law numbered, 222 *İlköğretim ve Eğitim Yasası* (Law of Primary Education). According these articles, *YİBOs* can be founded in order to educate children who are at the age of elementary school, living in villages and residential rural areas, if it is not possible to group the far villages and/or rural residential areas for founding regional schools (ibid: internet source). When the duration of compulsory schooling increased from 5 to 8 years in 1997 -via the law numbered 4306-, boarding schools were increased in number in order to meet the need of growing number of children in compulsory education age (ibid). According to the statistics of Ministry of National Education the number of *YİBOs*, in the educational year 2010 and 2011, is 539 (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [National Education Ministry]: 2011, 59).

As a research site, *YİBOs* are arenas which embody many political issues which are highly debated in current agenda of Turkey. Beside observing the volunteers in their

world we live in today can not completely understood just through macro level analysis and traditional single-sited ethnographies, because of fragmentation and dissolutions derived from post-Fordism, time and space compressions, flexible specialization, end of organized capitalism, globalization, transnationalism and migration flows. Multi-sited ethnography which makes researchers mobile though several modes and techniques such as following people, following the “things”, following the metaphor, following the story or allegory, following the life or biography and following the conflict (ibid: 106-110).

own “field”, being in boarding schools for field study gave me an opportunity to see, experience, observe and consider many issues, questions and problematique of politics in Turkey concretely that I had conceptualized and discussed some of them in abstract terms, previously. Moreover, volunteers’ efforts to be “non-political” and strategies not to be involved in “politics” in such an environment provided me a rich data on how their categories of “the political” and “non-political” were understood and experienced in everyday routines.

Some schools that I visited were located out of the settlement area. On the way to these schools in southeast of Turkey, one can see many armed vehicles, panzers and soldiers wore real war uniforms, that I have just seen on TV, searching for land mines with detectors on the sides of the roads we were passing through. The name of a school where we reached after seeing the war concrete terms was taken from name of a high-ranked soldier together with the name of his rank degree which highlights that he was a general for the ones who does not know the name of the man. In another day and in another boarding school, one can see the party building of *Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi* (Peace and Democracy Party) which is pro-Kurdish movement and gendarmerie station with armed soldiers side by side located just opposite of the school we were in.

In this context, one of the issues, which is discussed publicly, is the function of boarding school in the Kurdish populated regions as a “ideological state apparatus” (Gündoğan, 2010: 176). Undoubtedly formal education and schooling system as whole historically had a crucial role in consolidation of nation-state ideology. However according to Gündoğan (177-178) particularly these school were founded in order to assimilate “others” of the Turkish nation-state. He thinks that boarding school system were not new, but dated back to early republican period and especially the era just after the military coup in 1960 (ibid), although the names of schools might be changed throughout the years. The relatively much more emphasis on boarding schools is due to the fact that these schools are not only the milieu through which the curriculum assigned by the ministry is instructed. Pedagogical grounds on which the schools stand can be contradictory to the knowledge they get

from their parents.⁹ Since children spend much more times in school than their home, these schools can minimize the impact of families on socialization of the children in accordance with the political and cultural milieu, the families live within. Boarding schools are perceived as locations where children do not only get formal instructions of curriculum, but also become “assimilated”, according to this view.

Another issue which is stated as one of the most important problem of boarding school is the attendances of the girls. Most of the administrative staff of the schools and volunteers explained that it was a challenge for teachers to convince the parents of the girls in order to take their daughters to boarding schools for compulsory education. It is often stressed by volunteers that girls in boarding schools are not successful because they can not attend regularly to school; because of the burden they have, such as nursery. Beside this, the practices within schools in terms of the disciplining the relation between male and female students are not identical in every school. Refectories can be regarded as a signifier by volunteers about the practice exercised in school. In some schools, male and female students did not eat their meals at the same time. Instead females were waiting for males to leave the refectories, or vice versa. Even if they ate together, they sat separately to different sides of refectories. And in many other schools that I have been, the children sat anywhere they wanted. Moreover male and female students do not want to play, communicate or come closer with each other. In a school where I observed the distance between male and female students, I asked Nermin (who is a third year student in an engineering department and has been volunteering for FARPS for two years) about the relation between male and female students and the difference in rules and regulation in terms of seating arrangements, she told me it is mostly up to school administration. She implied that the political position of school

⁹ Boarding schools are fruitful sites for “ethnography of schooling” in order to explore and observe the “pedagogy of the state” which is implemented not only through a static written text -the curriculum- but also through the daily life in school, practices of teachers and children which are not static and incorporates heterogeneities. For an ethnography of schooling conducted in Turkey, see Sam Kaplan, *The pedagogical State: Education and Politics of National Culture in Post-1980 Turkey*; in France, Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Education and Identity in rural France: the Politics of Schooling*; in Peru, Fiona Wilson, “In the name of the State: Schools and teachers in Andean Province “ in *States of Imagination*, ed. Thomas Blum Hansen and Finn Stepputat, 313-344.

administration in terms of gender segregation and many other issues determines the way regulations are implemented. In other words, beside the central state, local figures have agencies and considerable impact on the political atmosphere encompassing the schools.

YİBOs are also an arena of various volunteer projects of NGOs and corporate responsibility projects¹⁰. In many boarding school I had been, the children wash their hands under a sign of “...is built by *Eczacıbaşı*” every morning. They spent their spare time in rooms called *bizim oda* (our room) of which the sign of “.....is built by *Arçelik*” is placed on the walls. *Eczacıbaşı* holding company whose core sectors are building products, healthcare and consumer products built the toilets and showers to many *YİBOs* as corporate social responsibility project named as *Eczacıbaşı Hijyen Projesi* (*Eczacıbaşı Hygiene Project*) which is carried out in collaboration of Ministry of National Education (internet source, *Eczacıbaşı Holding Company* web site). Similarly *Arçelik* company whose core business is production, marketing and after sales service of household appliances, components built and decorate an activity room called *Bizim Oda* (our room) where children rest, play and watch TV. This corporate responsibility activity is held in collaboration with the ministry (internet source, *Arçelik Componay website*). Moreover many national and international NGOs are launching joint campaigns with Ministry of National Education for many elementary schools, including *YİBOs* (internet source, *İlköğretim Genel Müdürlüğü [Directorate of Elementary Education]* website). Thus volunteers of FARPS are not the first volunteer group that the children would ever seen.

¹⁰ See Dinah Rajak ‘Uplift and Empower’: *The Market, Morality And Corporate Responsibility on South Africa’s Platinum Belt. In Hidden Hands in the Market Ethnographies: Ethnographies of Fair Trade, Ethical Consumption and Corporate Social Responsibility (Research in Economic Anthropology)*. 2008 eds De Neve et all. 297-324, for an ethnographic research on practices of corporate responsibility projects of a transnational mining company conducted through following the personnel from company’s corporate headquarters in London, to its mining operations on South Africa’s platinum belt.

1.2.3 Positionality of the Ethnographer: Volunteer or Researcher

Although the boarding school milieu is one place that I have been most frequent compared to other locations such as volunteers' depot and meetings, I can not define my research site just as boarding schools. The reason is that the site is not only a location, but it also incorporates people. In other words I can define my research site through the people whom I was looking for. The site is the volunteers are and where they are volunteering. I have just explained where the ethnography mostly located. Now I will depict the actors and position of me as a researcher in order to complete the audiences' illustration of research site and give them opportunity to interpret conditions, relations and the milieu under which the data in subsequent pages is collected, understood and represented.

Classical anthropology had studied the non-western "primitive other" for a long time. This "fiction" was left on the shelves, thanks to several processes and ideas. Some of these processes are that indigenous ethnographers had started to study her/his own people (Lee and Ackerman 1994: 341) and anthropologists' focus shifted to consider "the question of what produces [the anthropologists] us" (Ortner 1991: 164, cited in Escobar 1993: 379) by inviting to draw attention the power relations within the anthropologists' world, namely universities, and call to analyse the "micro-practices" of the academy which Strathern (1988, cited in *ibid*) called "ethnography of western knowledge practices".

This study is neither about micro-practices of social science nor about what are the values that shape social scientific imagination and practice. However it is about micropolitics and practices of an organization of a university-based group. What I try to do is not exploring the world of the "powerless", namely "village children" in boarding schools, instead, I intend to understand the "powerful" -who is educated, urban and middle class- while interacting the "powerless".

This thesis is about strategies, practices, experiences and perceptions of people who are within the university milieu where scientific knowledge in many scopes is produced. Thus this situation also creates power relations between the "observer" and the "observed", in different accounts compared to the classical power relation between the "native" and the "ethnographer". Since my informants were either

academicians or graduate or undergraduate students, they were very curious about my thesis observations and comments. Sometimes the academicians offered some concepts and perspectives for analyzing data gathered from the field study.

My first contact with the group was meeting with the head of the organization. Initially, the head was very polite and encouraging for me to conduct such a field study. At first meeting, we have talked for more than two hours and he told me their experiences in schools, the children, teachers and their activities. His memory was so excellent that he was remembering names and life stories of lots of children even he had met some long time ago. I was so happy while leaving his room in the university where he works. However, in the second time we met, he seemed to be uncomfortable with the idea of being researched. Although he mentioned they were not engaged in politics many times in first meeting, he repeated his words and said me that he should read the text before the evaluation of the jury and then he suggested being member of my jury. The reason he gave me such offers is much related to the subject of this thesis. The reason was that the organization and the university should not be “badly” represented and especially politically represented, since it would influence their relations with many actors. It was a hard job for me to explain him that my intent was not “bad”.

In addition to the power relations that influence the research process, “there is no escape the mental and physical presence of the researcher in the field and in the text” (Coffey 1999: 17). In other words, biographical dimension in ethnography is very influential in terms of observing and telling the lives of people, and identifying the key themes of the task and the text (ibid), because ethnography is a process of the experience embedded in the field study and a product of what the ethnographer see or fail to see, choices, misunderstandings and feelings (Tedlock 1991: 72).

After taking the informed consent, I started the field study by participating some volunteer work, a few meeting and the first volunteer project. What they mainly expected from me was choosing an activity and participate the projects as a volunteer. The head chose an activity for me thinking that I could do it because I am a social science student. The name of the activity was *Geleceğe Mektuplar* (letters to future).

I learnt content of the activity from an instruction booklet which was written by another volunteer who did the same activity some years ago. The main component of the activity is to make children to write a letter to their future. Children are expected to write their desires and hopes and what they are planning to do until next year. When they complete, they would give to me, because the organization would send the letters back one year later. However the activity was not so simple that the volunteer have to do the instructions step by step which are written on the booklet. According to the instruction, after introducing myself and the organization, I was expected to explain the children whose ages in the range of eleven to fourteen, what is the notions of “plan”, “goal” and “dream” and ask them their plans, which profession and which department they want to choose. While explaining the notions, the instruction highlights a message to be given to the children: “[I]n order to succeed and to reach our goal, [what is required is] to define a goal; to study hard and to struggle against the obstacles without giving up”¹¹ Then I was expected to tell a “success story” making up a character who has a “goal” but also some obstacles. The hero/heroine should work hard to attain her/his goal. Finding a “success story” was one of the issues that I had great difficulty in doing, because I do not find it realistic. Who decides whether one is “successful” or not, what “success” means to the volunteers, whether it is another way of saying to children that they are “unsuccessful” were the questions I always repeated on my own. I also told the head that I have difficulty to find a “success story”. He mentioned some stories he tells all children in the first hours of the project during his presentation (which will be touched on in next chapters) and offered me referring such stories. He added that the central idea of the activity is to give the message on how to make plan or organization for summer, for next year, for five years time or for their future, because he thought that they were unable to make plans and organization. If they got a letter written in last year, they would remember or compare what they would desire last year and their real situation. Although he explained the activity as not “success”-oriented, the most difficult moment of the fieldwork for me is the activity hours. I did not tell “success” stories and just referred the ones the children listened, before they saw me. I asked what they would like to do, which occupation they liked

¹¹ “[B]aşarmak ve amacımıza ulaşmak için, [gerekli olan] bir amaç belirlemek, amacımıza ulaşmak için çok çalışmak, engeller karşısında yılmadan mücadele etmek.”

most, and explained some occupations and profession they are asking. Then I wanted them to close their eyes in order to dream their future and the things they would like to do or they would like to have, as the booklet instructed. While they are dreaming, I had to direct their dreams by narrating their future. This narration should include many details in order to make them dream incorporating some key messages and events such as completing the elementary school, high school and then university for which all of the efforts is done; making them dream their “future” university years and first days in their career by defining the clothes, the people, the places and how they (should) feel; lastly waking them up and making them write their dreams what they should do for their dream to be real on the back side of the UNICEF cards. I did this activity approximately sixty or seventy times throughout the fieldwork as how the instructions and the head expect me to do. I sometimes changed and tried to it my way, by making them dream not only education, university, exams and success, but also other things that the children said me just before dreaming. Although I felt uncomfortable with my words most of the time, I should remain within the boundaries that the instructions and the head drew, in order to complete the fieldwork. Children particularly the girls sometimes rejected to write. One of them once said: “why will I write? It is so ridiculous, they [her family] won’t let me continue my education, I don’t want to continue, as well”¹². Beside this, while all the children were writing, some children asked me in whisper whether they could write that they want be *kaymakam* (district governor) to aid the poor. The first time I heard this question, it was not a surprising event for me. However when I heard the same sentence three times it in different places, in Mardin, Kilis and Adana; I sometimes felt angry and ambivalent about the giving up the fieldwork, because I do not believe what I was saying. My field notes were full of questions and comments about how volunteers believe that they contribute to a “change” in existing situation, without considering the “class”, “cultural capital”, “gender”, the “structures” and the “politics”; how voluntary-based thinking of the neo-liberal age shapes their conceptual frame about the inequalities, why and how they can believe that they are “non political”, why they are often repeating being “non political”, even within the

¹² “Neden yazayım? Çok saçma, zaten [ailedekiler] beni okutmayacaklar, hem ben de okumak istemiyorum.”

group. Some of my friends even accused me for catching a “Malinowski syndrome”¹³ in metaphorical sense of the term. After a while I realized that volunteers’ feeling and way of thinking is not one-faceted when I started to see and they told me their thoughts about their own practices and experiences. Although the people within the group were changing and not the same in every project, there emerged several volunteers who always responded as such concerning many different situations: “I tried to motivate the child, but I know it won’t be helpful”¹⁴ or “It is all about the system, actually the only thing that they need is money.”¹⁵ Thus this study is based on the multi-faceted and heterogeneous ideas, perceptions and experiences of the volunteers about their practice, volunteering and how “volunteering”, “politics” and “non politics” mean to them and how these notions are related with each in while explaining their conceptual frame.

1.2.4 Data Analysis and Writing Process

Before I went deep into the field work, I had some prior ideas and questions in my mind. Perspectives on Neo-nationalism (Gingrich 2000; Bora 2003) and Neo-Kemalism (Erdoğan 2000) and the engagement of Kemalism with the neo-liberal thought (Özyürek 2006) in civil society some of the issues which I had found parallel considerations. Being not so much independent from some of these themes, I did not expect that volunteers draw a strong conceptual boundary between volunteerism and what they defined as “politics”.

In this study, I tried to stand on grounded theory which is not a distinct stage of the research that starts while analyzing, but starts with data collection and shape the

¹³ I am referring to, the book *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, manuscript of Bronislaw Malinowski which he was never intended to publish but was published by his wife in 1967 after his death. The diaries included his personal ideas and emotions through which he presented his dislike to his informants in Trobriand Island in his field work years between 1914-15 and 1917-18. This book engendered many debate among anthropologists that the personal dimension of ethnographic research and acknowledged that “researcher is a part of the research situation” (Crick 1982: 20).

¹⁴ “Çocuğu motive etmeye çalıştım ama hiçbir işe yaramayacak, biliyorum.”

¹⁵ “Bunların hepsi sistemle ilgili, onların tek ihtiyacı para aslında.”

notes, memoranda informally (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 174). I develop my research question inductively through coding and data analyzing process.

I used a qualitative data analysis program, MAXQDA, while coding the data. Basing on open coding process which is one of the coding types of grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 1990: 423), I grouped conceptually similar, events, practices and interactions etc, to form categories and sub-categories. Hence I tried to give the diversity though comparing the several dimension within the codes and sub-codes.

While organizing, I tried to explain my findings through descriptive information about people, places, practices and organization. The reason I preferred to follow this strategy is that the main theme of this thesis is intrinsic in every detail of the organization -background, strategies, choices, interactions, rules, perceptions, offers etc... In other words, I did not prefer to separate the descriptive data with the analysis of the themes I have been searching for. So I tried to organize the text in a way that the audience will explore the field and analysis, simultaneously

Knowing that the informants will read the text led to a sense of caution about how and to what extend I should anonymize the names, events and institutions that the audiences will be able to get the insights of the text. As I stated, all the names of the people and institutions are pseudonym. Beside the ethical concerns, the reason why I anonymize the names, is directly related with subject of this study.

1.3 Literature Overview

Proliferation of associations in terms of number, range and geography in late twentieth century is assessed as “non-governmental”, “associational” or “quite revolution” and claimed to be the one of the immense issues that raises too many questions about state society relations (Salamon 1994: 109). NGOs which have the capacity to challenge or change the existing power relations have many definition and scopes of activity. NGOs are defined based on their functions, organization structure, goals membership and the levels they are operating (Fisher 1997: 447). The term is applied to groups providing charity or social welfare services,

development and support organizations, social action groups struggling for structural change and support groups that provides legal, research communication and locally based groups (ibid). Being diversified in number, aims and scope of activity, they are required to be classified in order to be sufficiently analyzed. Korten (1990: 115-127, cited in Clarke 1998: 42) distinguishes NGOs into three generations in accordance with their ideological orientations: (1) service oriented voluntary organizations which are ostensibly non-political; development NGOs using strategies such as primary health care or agricultural cooperatives organize peasants at local level and involved in political campaigning and protests; (3) NGOs dating to the 1970s Latin America, focusing on mobilization and raising critical consciousness of their members and they are not service providers, but support the issue-based social movements. Among those generations of NGOs, the first generation, which is the main focus of this study, constitutes the largest group in underdeveloped world (Clarke 1998: 42).

Voluntary action in various realms is also appreciated by states and international organizations that states actively participate. For instance, United Nations (UN) proclaimed 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers and recommended many ways in which government could support voluntary action (resolution 56/38 of 5 December 2001). The definition of voluntary action made by UN as a part of 2001 voluntary year is that (ibid, 3):

The terms volunteering, volunteerism and voluntary activities refer to a wide range of activities, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery and other forms of civic participation, undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor.

The definition suggests that besides being an organizational activity, volunteer action is considered as a part of every day life that one can practice, experience or observe it many times in his/her daily routines. The numbers and the UN declaration imply that differing from the other activities that the other generations engaged, volunteer act and volunteer organization supported by many actors all over the world.

Ludwig (2007: 2) states that volunteerism constitutes an important mode of social identity reveals itself in various realms of religious, secular, private, public and etc. Besides its historical political grounds in America, which is stated as “art of associations” by Tocqueville, volunteerism is strongly emphasized by the politicians particularly by Thatcher and Reagan in the context of providing services instead of governments (ibid: 3). Since the issue is highly complicated, Ludwig (4-13) suggests making archeology of the notion through pointing out the religious sources which is American kind of Puritan Protestantism; through historical sources which is early construction of American society from the migrants who fled from the strong states of Europe (and thus avoidance and absence of a sense of strong state); and discursive sources of American state in the context of military service beginning from World War I to the “coalition of *willing*” in Iraq war (emphasis added). For him, the reason why volunteer act had deep roots in American history, politics and society is indicated through the historical discussion on religion and secularism (13). As a result of Enlightenment, European states always stand above the church, in order to preserve religious liberty, whereas in America defending the position against authority of state was perceived as a mean for defending religious liberty by migrants who were fled from religious conflict in Europe in early periods of American history (ibid). So the difference in terms of people’s historical conceptualization of the relations among state, society and individual constitutes the grounds on which volunteer identity stands.

Volunteer act and NGOs are also discussed touching on similar themes but not framed by religion-secularism conflict, but framed by relations among state, society and market.

There are two opposing tendencies in the literature of volunteerism in NGOs that discussed NGOs and volunteerism in terms of consolidation of democracy and consolidation of late or neo-liberalism. To illustrate, first tendency is a perspectives which celebrates volunteerism in context of individual and citizen empowerment against the authoritarian state, enhancing democracy and participating the solution of social issues. For instance, Lichao He (2009) sees proliferation of volunteer activities and social participation in China is an opportunity to develop sphere of society that is independent from state. Basing on surveys, it is demonstrated that the

dominant and hegemonic position of Chinese state in civil society. His complaints about dominant perception regarding citizens' responsibility are not shaped by liberal values of civic culture and social participation, but by state-centric ideas (ibid: 335). Voluntary associations are also regarded as a "favored child" of development agencies, that they are regarded as apolitical that help to assist individuals and groups to compete in market and provide welfare services to those who are marginalized by the market (Fisher 1997: 444). Based on the description of nongovernmental and non-profit, NGOs are idealized as third sector and perceived only as organizations help others by not seeking any political and profit-based aims (ibid: 442).

Second tendency sees volunteerism and NGOs including grass-root groups are discussed in the context of challenging and transforming the state and society relations either politicizing some issues that were not previously politicized or depoliticizing some others in the name of democracy and participation (ibid: 445). Kamat (2004: 156) states that despite the popular understanding that interprets NGOs as equal with democratization, it has been ignored the role of NGOs in making people, communities and countries integrate the world capitalist system (ibid). According to Kamat (157), Global policy actors such as UN, World Trade Organization (WTO) or World Bank accommodates NGOs within the current development projects by following two strategies of pluralizing the public sphere in inter-state level and depoliticizing private sphere in private sphere level. Lacey and Ilcan (2006) associate volunteerism with state ideology that legitimizes the ideology of advanced liberal state in terms of withdrawal from some of its previous duties. They approach volunteerism in the context citizenship and argue that volunteering started to play a vital role, because it is a force in the responsabilization of citizenry, under advanced liberalism (ibid). For them, the idea of "active citizenship" is to be achieved by volunteers' participation and thus responsabilization for their own well-being and public services which was formerly perceived as the duty of government agencies. They maintain that the language which is used by "active citizenship" or "responsible citizenship" highlight the individual volunteer's responsibility to others and provide a sense of reward such as doing good, performed charity or shared in a common Christian duty which are stated as the government policies in Thatcher's Britain (ibid: 38-39).

The proliferation of NGOs can be regarded as a post-1980 event in Turkey (Narlı 2002: 13). Prior to this period, the right of founding association is recognized firstly in 1908 constitution and with *Cemiyet Kanunu* (Law of Society) of 1909 the first regulations were done in this realm (ibid). This law was implemented until a specific law of *Dernekler Yasası* (Law of Associations) was launched in 1938 was implemented until 1972, but continuously changed and interfered in every periods of coup (13-14). In post 1980 period, many factors such as implementation of liberal economic policies, migration from rural to urban areas and the social movements which were not represented in official realms led a tremendous increase in the number of associations which is now approximately eighty thousand (ibid). Beside this, the relations between European Union and Turkey are very central in this proliferation that EU developed policies support financially and politically many associations in the context of adjustment policies (Grigoriadis 2009: 55). 1990s was an important historical period for NGOs in terms of increase in number and diversification (ibid: 47). In addition to the its rise because of harsh impact of liberal economic political program, Founding associations pave the way for political action for ideas and actors once marginalized in state realm, such as Kurdish movement and political Islam (ibid). On the other hand, penetration of these movements in associational realm had an impact in emerging some organization privatizing the discourse of Kemalism. Erdoğan (2000) evaluates emergence of Kemalist organizations as Neo-Kemalism that differs from classical one in terms of juxtaposing the means of market with Kemalist discourse. A study which problematizes volunteering, the civil society and democracy in a publicly visible civil society organization *Türk Eğitim Gönüllüleri Vakfı* (*TEGV*- Education Volunteers Foundation of Turkey) illustrates this interpretation. Analyzing the discursive practices of institution and volunteers through interviews, İpek (2006: 2) figures out how the peculiar discourse produced by *TEGV* juxtaposes the Kemalist discourse on modernity and nationalism with the neo-liberal discourse on volunteerism and self-responsibility. Basing on these ideas she suggests interpreting civil society beyond democratization discourse and criticizes the separation between realms of state and civil society. For her, there emerged a middle class working in civil society organizations for sharing the burden of the state. Thus volunteers are

characterized as between governors and population and civil society consolidates the discourse of the state and market, rather than constitute a “third space”.

Instead of a macro perspective presented above, in this study I am intended to investigate the micro-politics of a volunteer NGO in order to investigate the individual perceptions for interpreting how these macro-political phenomenon works, represented, negotiated or rejected in the routine of daily life.

1.4 Theoretical Frame:

1.4.1 Inquiring “the political” and “the non-political”

This study is aimed to explore the meaning of volunteerism on how the boundaries among “volunteerism”, “the political” and “the non-political” is perceived and how boundaries among these notions drawn, conceptualize and constitutes a ground for this practice

The notion of “politics” and how it is perceived is analyzed by Schedler (1996) in theoretical terms by referring the historical moment we live in. He states that in the present era of the history a popular disenchantment with politics, which he considers as “antipolitics”, is experienced (ibid: 1). Self-regulated order rooted in the distinction between a market economy and market society (Gledhill 2007: 340). This distinction is based on the transformation of state or shrinking state’s roles and duties in terms of social equality and justice in last thirty years through new liberalism, leaving the welfare regime from state to market oriented approach (Erbaş, 2009: 56-57). This shift led to a re-definition of state’s function and area of responsibility which had been covering protection of people through mass education, regulation of payments and working life, retirement and health; and supporting individuals against the threats of poverty social exclusion and unemployment (Buğra and Keyder, 2006: 9). Historically, geographically and categorically named as “social” or “welfare”, this form of state plays a key role in lessening individuals’ apprehensions about the future concerning these threats (Erbaş, 2009: 67). As the result of transformation of responsible state, the ones who have to shoulder the risks

through maximizing their advantage by their own in order not to 'fail' became individuals. This is one of the premises on which the distinction of market economy and market society is based (Gledhill, 2007: 340).

For Schedler (1996: 5) through this process, politics is perceived as useless, worse and even harmful and engaged in some problems which do not exist. Although politics is a denial of fate, because of the harsh economic programs that technocrats impose and justify through a language of static, unavoidable, natural, economic laws, politics is appeared as external constrains (ibid: 6-8) and conceptualized as fate or luck that one can either possess or not. These are some insights, which Schedler suggests, behind the antipolitical thinking.

Another scholar who uses the same notion, antipolitics, is Fergusson (2007[1990]). His ethnography on a rural development projects illustrates how anti-political is thinking constructed through these projects. Lesotho in which Fergusson did his fieldwork, is a small country completely surrounded by lands of South Africa. This country is also surrounded by development and aid projects which were done by more than seventy international agencies, non and quasi-governmental organizations (ibid: 6-7). Fergusson's study focuses on understanding the "development" industry, that was observed that it is usually unsuccessful and did not achieve its goals (ibid: 9). Analyzing a project held by World Bank and Canadian International Development Agency, he points out that although these projects fail to achieve their objectives, they achieved to entrench the state power (ibid: 255) and reduce the poverty into a technical problem by promising technical solutions (ibid: 256). In other words, besides expanding the bureaucratic state power, development agencies are depoliticizing the poverty and the state through working as an anti-politics machine (ibid).

Concerning the disappearance of politics and how political thinking dissolve, there are some ethnographic studies grounded on the relation between "participation" and politics (Morgan 1993; Paley 2001). In the ethnographic study of Lynn Morgan (1993) held in Costa Rica, it is demonstrated that community participation is understood as a technical, not a political concept by the international experts in NGOs, however it is reinforced and legitimized the existing state policies and

sociopolitical formations (ibid: 161). Citizen participation to health service is represented as a priority for democracy and at the same time health is represented by the state agencies is above politics (ibid: 164).

Similarly Paley (2001) focuses on the relation between Chilean government officials and grassroots groups from a shanty town based on the issue of participation. She aims to understand different political durations and conditions in Chile through changes of a volunteer local group organization, Llaretta health promoters, in a shanty town, La Bandera, in an urban neighborhood. For Paley (2001: 142), in post dictatorship period in Chile, there emerged confusion about the view of role of such kind of organizations. The neighborhood is a potential place for sources of epidemic illnesses because of the problems in garbage removal, drain and clean water. This led to a cholera epidemic in summer 1994. Paley indicates that Ministry of Health and local administrators used a language which reponsibilizes the people by launching a campaign having the motto of “Let’s protect our selves from Cholera” and by representing calling the state to solve problem as a remain of dictatorship and citizen participation as a necessity and characteristics of people in democracy (ibid: 169). For Paley (ibid, 146), actually grassroots become less powerful compared to authoritarian rule. Since, while “participation” offered a sense of meaning to citizens, it simultaneously limits the space through which individuals act. What she calls the situation is “paradox of participation” (2001: 146). Two cases interpret participation and responsabilization of individuals as practices and means of state for depoliticizing the problems.

Two ethnographic studies on Turkey, assess “the political” in different zones. Navaro-Yashin’s (2002) and Özyürek’s (2006) ethnographic studies, which are based on production and reproduction of the “political” in public life and personal realm, discuss secularism and Kemalism. These studies indicates how the notion “political” is experienced by people in everyday life; the transformation in the meaning of the “political”. Navaro-Yashin (ibid: 2) suggests the notion of “public life” as a site where “the political” generates. This notion is positioned against the categories of “public sphere”, “public culture”, “civil society” and “the state”, because, she (ibid) sees these categories are engendered from the assumptions on distinction between power and the resistance or people and the state. For her, the

idea of “public life” enables one to analyze people, the political and the state in the same domain, rather than two opposed entities. She (ibid: 6-7) demonstrates that it is not possible to study state and the political in Turkey without studying secularism in public life, because confrontation between secularism and Islamism are represented as a major threat for the integrity of the state in Turkey of mid 1990s. While exploring the representation of state rituals and fantasies, Navaro Yashin explains that the state do not enforce civil society to produce its rituals such as soldiers farewell ceremonies, commodification of Atatürk and flag through converting them as accessorize hanged in houses, cars, shops etc. (ibid: 117-119). However it enables people to practice and produce by themselves through which it perpetuates its power (ibid: 119). This analysis is like an explanation of why she offers “public life” against the distinctions between “state” and “civil society” and “public” and “private”, because she interprets the power of state is produced and reproduced in spheres outside the state. In other words, Navoro-Yashin shows that there is not a direct, one-directional relation from state to people in terms of production of the “political”. On the contrary, public life has agency and is able to produce the state and the political without being enforced. Özyürek (2006: 188), on the one hand, agrees with this argument on privatization of state ideology and “the political” but on the other hand she finds the analysis inadequate to clarify “why the state power moved outside the state at this particular moment of history?”(ibid). In her ethnographic study, Özyürek (2006) answers this question on how the meaning of “the political” is changed through privatization of the state ideology. She explains privatization of personalization of “the political” through “popular neo-liberalism” (ibid: 4), which is commodification and consumption of symbols of Atatürk and the interest in life stories of first generation of republic and through the feeling of nostalgia. In other words she investigates how people in their daily life translate, adopt and affiliate the history, ideology and symbolism of state-led modernization to the ideas of market-led modernization (ibid: 3). For Özyürek (ibid: 4-6) privatization and personalization of politics is not unique to Turkish politics because neo-liberalism creates a new kind of “politics” or “governmentalizes” in Foucault’s term, which constitute the basis of citizenship and legitimate political participation. The ideas suggested in these two studies indicate the transformation the political in the meaning and in the way it is experienced and practice. Inquiring different ways of

practicing politics without constructing one dimensional relations only prioritizing state dominance or influence is also the perspective this study based on. I interpret volunteer activities as a way of practicing politics that state ideology and state politics do not directly influence, but enable individuals to produce and practice by themselves. Concerning volunteerism and its relation with what is defined as “political” and “non-political, I also consider, likewise Özyürek, that it is a “new kind of politics” which is synchronically produced and constructed by a language of avoidance “the political” and celebrating the “non-political”. Thus I will stand on the concept of “governmentality”, in order to understand the new politics of non-political.

1.4.2 The Concept of “governmentality”

In his lectures in Collège de France, in 1978; Foucault defined a concept, “governmentality” (Foucault 1991: 87-104) which was followed by many scholars for exploring the modern power and politics. He proposed a general definition, “conduct of conduct”, which means forms of activities that shape, direct and guide human behaviors (Gordon 1991: 2). This idea considers human conduct as something that can be governed, regulated, controlled shaped for seeking ends and it is regulated through very broad range of things such as economies, population, industries, souls etc (Dean 1999: 11).

Defining the term as such brings a question of who governs who. The answer covers not only the governing of state or, how agents, individually or collectively, exercise power over others, but it involves how we govern our selves (1999: 12). It emphasizes the relation between government of ourselves, government of others and government of state and asks questions about how we govern and how we are governed (1999: 2).

Since Foucault does not identify politics with only party and program and who possesses the power in state, he contributed the problematization of politics and power relations within the encounters that make up the everyday experiences of individuals (Rose 1996: 37). What he pursues through governmentality is the

relation between self and self, private interpersonal relations involving control or guidance, relations within social institutions and communities and relations concerned with political power (Gordon 1991: 2-3). The strategies of governing of others and selves connect the forces and institutions that are assumed as “political”, with the norms and objectives shaping and managing the individual and collective conduct that are constituted as “non-political” (Rose 1996: 37-38). This perspective links the public with private, compulsory and voluntary, law and norm, public conduct and subjective emotional intellectual insights through which individuals govern their lives (Rose 1996: 38).

Consequently, governmentality is more or less calculated and rational activities of variety of authorities and agencies that seek to shape individual and collective conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interest and believes. Thus, it employs multiplicity of techniques and knowledge (Dean 1999: 11).

Governmentality is not a direct determination of conduct of its objects. Rather, the term presupposes the agency, activity or the freedom of those whom power is exercised. In this sense, it is not a synonym of power, but the interaction or the contact point of techniques of domination, made up through schools, prisons, clinics and techniques of self which means how individuals governed themselves. In other words, a connection exists between subjectification and subjection (Burchell 1996: 20), and practices of government and practices of self (Dean 1999: 12).

Studies on governmentality have three dimensions (Inda 2005: 2-10). First dimension involves political reason or reasons of government composed of knowledge, expertise and calculation that made up the political rationalities through which people think and make themselves open to political programming. Second dimension is the techniques, or technologies of government- that is to say, mechanisms, measures, instruments, programs- that political authority practice in order to shape and instrumentalize the human conduct. The final dimension is the subjects of government that covers diverse types of selves, persons, actors, agents, individual or collective identities. This study deals with the last dimension and focuses on the subjects of government and the processes on how subjects govern themselves through constructing “the volunteer”, “political and “the non political”

Foucault applied the perspective of governmentality to four historical domains: Greek philosophy and early Christianity; early modern Europe; 18th century beginning of the liberalism, and lastly post-war forms of neo liberal thoughts in Germany, US and France (Gordon 1991: 3). Nevertheless his work on Governmentality explicitly responded the decline in welfare state ideal and changing role of the state (Dean 1999: 2).

According to him and his followers, in the first phase of state, the main problematic in the classical liberal thought is the opposition between the need to govern for maintaining the morality and order, and the need to restrict government for enhancing liberty and market economy (Rose 1996: 39). There were even some thoughts that civil society or nation do not require a state and have the capacity of governing itself (Burchell 1996: 27). The liberty and rights of individuals ought to be respected while drawing certain limits, in order to legitimate scope of political and legal regulations. Practices of government such as schooling, domesticated family, reformatory prison etc. emerged for the purpose of creating subjects who do not need to be governed by others but will to govern, master and care themselves within the limits drew by the state (Rose 1996: 45).

For Rose (40), in the second phase of state, a new formula for exercising the state rule emerged for governing the undesirable consequence of industrial life in the name of society. State took responsibility for generating a multiplicity of technologies of government that would socialize both subjects and economic life in the name of collective security. In other words, state started to govern its subjects through “society” (ibid: 48-49).

In the third phase, the “society” is argued as a product of governmental intervention and shaped and created by the institutions constructed by the state such as social insurance, unemployment, social work and state education (Burchell 1996: 27). Hence, neo-liberal rule sought to de-governmentalize the state and de-statize practices of government. It would not govern through “society”, but through regulated choices of individual citizens who was constructed as subjects of choices and aspirations to self-actualization and self fulfillment (Rose 1996: 41). In other words, neo-liberals solve problem of how to govern the liberty by constructing the

legal, institutional cultural conditions that enables competitive games for entrepreneurial conduct (ibid: 27). Thus, the difference between old and new liberalism is the former regard the market as a natural phenomenon and presupposes that space of economic nature ought to be secured and supervised by the state. Whereas the latter can only be exist under certain political legal and institutional conditions that must be constructed by the state (Burchell 1996: 23). To illustrate, for rationalization the mass unemployment, the neo-liberal school of thought made the notion of “individual as enterprise” politically acceptable. This implies the sense in which one remains employed, if one continuously preserve the entrepreneur self and reproduce and reconstruct one’s human capital. This is the care of self (Gordon 1991: 44).

Neo-liberal governmentality defined its subjects through a new way that active individuals “enterprise themselves to maximize their quality of life” (Rose, 1996: 57). It is “autonomization of society” (Burchell 1996: 27) that involves invention of an “enterprise form” and promotion of enterprise culture for all kinds of conduct - conducts of organizations, conduct of government and conduct of individuals (ibid: 29). It offers individuals and collectivities to actively involve resolving the kinds of issues that used to be held by the responsibility of state. The individuals assume active responsibility for these activities for carrying them out and for their outcomes. This can be identified as a form of “responsibilization” in which the governed are encouraged freely rationally to regulate their conduct (ibid: 29).

Focusing on the subject of government means, on the one hand, understanding how governmental practices promote particular types of individual and collective identity and how government is making its modern subjects such as workers, citizens, consumers, students etc. It is, on the other hand, dealing with how agents constitute their own selves and identities. What this approach offers is not a one-dimensional reasoning through referring just the identifier role of the state. In exact terms, although governmental practices of state might aim to create, control and shape specific kinds of subjects, this does not mean that these practices necessarily or completely succeed in doing so (Inda, 2005: 10-11). That is why, it is important to look not only how practices of government shape the individual and collective identity, but also to look how agents and individuals negotiate, refuse or adapt with

these forms of governing (Inda 2005: 10-11). Therefore studies on governmentality gives priorities to “how” questions aiming to analyse identities, strategies, forms of knowledge, agencies, limits and common conditions of practices (Dean 1999: 29; Gordon 1991: 7).

Inquires and investigations in this study on the processes through which individuals construct their perceptions is an ethnographic attempt to constitute the answer for “how” questions. Focusing on perceptions, practices and experience of individuals, volunteers, is important for exploring how they shape and govern themselves and conceive the particular which is their practice and the universal which is “the political”.

CHAPTER II

THE ORGANIZATION and VOLUNTEERS

2.1 Taking Part in a *project*

A bright, white bus on which “science bus” was written loomed at the road of a Regional Primary Boarding School. Many children were in the windows of three-storey dormitory building, looking at new-comers curiously. Teachers and administrators of the school were waiting, ready to meet the guests, and even formed a queue side by side to shake the hands of the people who were coming from a long journey.

At the other side of the doors of the bus, everyone was excited. Volunteers, most of them aged between 18 and 27, were in motion, standing in the narrow corridor of the bus. Before arrival, as the bus approached the school, a young man was speaking to the microphone, holding a few pages of paper and standing at the very front of the bus. He was talking about the school we were heading at and informed people about “do”s and “don’t”s. Two men at their late fifties were sitting in the front seats listening to him carefully. One of these men sometimes interrupted the young ones talk and wanted him to add something more, addressing the crowd in the bus. When the speech was about to be ended, one of those in the bus who seemed to be very confident, started to distribute two nails which were twisted and attached to each other to the people standing in the corridor of the bus. One young woman shouted “Wave your hands to the left side as well; there are children on this side too.”¹⁶ The last words of the speaker on the microphone were “The project is starting, may it be easy, friends”¹⁷. Later I learned that each visit to schools is considered as “a

¹⁶ “Sol tarafa da el sallayın, bu tarafta da çocuklar var”

¹⁷ “Proje başlıyor, kolay gelsin arkadaşlar”

project”¹⁸ in which volunteers do *etkinlik* (educational activities), perform scientific experiments, play, and chat and spend time with children.

A project of the volunteer group composed of students and academicians was starting at a Regional Primary Boarding School, in one of the provinces of Turkey. The bus stopped when it arrived in the garden of the school. The gates opened, and academicians’ hands were shaken first. The children started to come downstairs from their dormitories and greeted the volunteer *ağabeys* (elderly brothers) and *ablas* (elderly sisters). Volunteers want children to call them with these titles; this was one of the rules read in the science bus. If children get confused and call volunteers as *öğretmenim* (my teacher), all volunteers respond by saying “I am not your teacher, we came here just for one day, your teachers are always with you”¹⁹. The first moment of interaction was giving the children a game, the attached nails that every volunteer had taken a pair in the bus. I was trying to observe the volunteer closest to me because I did not know what to do with the nails and the children while they were getting closer and closer. A volunteer that I could see was asking the children to separate the nails from each other by themselves, after giving his pair of nails to a child. Then I was doing the same thing. The girl to whom I gave the nails could not do at her first, second and third trials. A boy nearby tried to grab the nails confidently, saying he would be able to do it if the nails were at his hands. Meanwhile I tried to keep on observing the nearest volunteer because I really did not know what to do with the children, and their number was increasing in every second. The volunteer was saying to another girl who wanted to give up separating the nails “Don’t give up at once, keep on struggling; we can only solve our problems we face if we go on working without giving up”²⁰. I repeated the volunteer’s words to the girl whom I gave the nails, not allowing the boy to grab them, but she could not separate and let the boy take them.

¹⁸ Significance of the formulation of their activity as “project” will be explained in following pages.

¹⁹ “Ben öğretmen değilim, biz buraya sadece bir gün için geldik, ama öğretmenleriniz hep sizinle.”

²⁰ “Pes etme hemen, biraz daha uğraş, ancak pes etmeden çalışırsak karşımıza çıkan sorunları çözebiliriz.”

One hour passed. All the children started to enter the refectory of the school in which the chairs had been arranged by volunteers in order to have a conference design. The sound system, laptops, a white curtain used as screen and projectors which were in the baggage of the bus were carried and set by some volunteers, while the others were dealing with the children and the nails. Everything was ready on time, and the head of the organization, who was one of the men sitting on the front seat, started to his presentation.

Meanwhile, Ahmet *Hoca*, who was the other man sitting in the front seat of the bus, and a few volunteers were in the teachers' room to meet the administrators and teachers of the school. He is an academician in the Faculty of Education at the University of N. and an ex-bureaucrat in the Ministry of National Education thus he knows *YİBOs* very well. After introducing himself he talked about their organization and talked about FARPS which is the name of a foundation and three student clubs in three different universities where the group came from and the activities they arrange in their university campuses. Afterwards he turned to volunteers standing in a line and asked them to introduce themselves. Happily I was at the end of the line, and again had the opportunity to observe and imitate what the volunteers were doing. In a few seconds, I realized there was nothing to be excited about because the volunteers just said their names and their departments and the university in which they studied. After that, Ahmet *Hoca* took the floor and said that the children in regional boarding schools, the village children, rarely saw university students or graduates in their daily lives; they have limited opportunities to know or meet the people who have different professions. However, thanks to their projects, he said, they could meet the *abla* -showing a young female student- who will be an environmental engineer. He added that it could encourage children to continue their education and to go to university. Some teachers were nodding their heads while listening to him.

One hour passed after the meeting ceremony with teachers was over. I found Ahmet *Hoca* standing alone in the garden of school right in front of the main entrance, and

we started to talk about the organization, the projects, voluntarism and the students. He summarized the answers of all my questions in one sentence:²¹

“There are two aims of these projects, the first one is to be role-models in order to motivate the village children to continue their education; the second one is to get the university students to know the facts of the country and make them acquire social responsivity.”

The school bells rang, it was the time for me to go to a class and do my activity. While going to class, I was thinking on the relation among the universities, the foundation and the student clubs; and what Ahmet *Hoca* meant by “facts” and “role modeling” and “social responsivity”.

2.2 Background of the Organization

Derived from complex networks and being a multifaceted organization, FARPS incorporates a foundation, students clubs in three universities and a center in a university in Turkey, which is difficult to understand and to explain even by the volunteers of the very organization.

The story of FARPS began when the head of the organization was a student in USA. In the second half of 1970s, a young couple, Nihat and Şevval, were studying in two different universities in the US. They had scholarships from the Turkish government and started to study as PhD students in departments of mechanical and computer engineering. They were living in Princeton, New Jersey, which is equidistant from Philadelphia and New York. Turkish students in Nihat’s university had the opportunity to make a one-hour radio program in Turkish, in the university radio station. In those years, there were only 15 or 20 Turkish students in the university Nihat studied; however the real audience of the program was the Turkish migrant community living in the region in large numbers. Nihat was one of those who were

²¹ “Bu projelerin iki amacı var; birincisi, köy çocuklarını okumaya heveslendirmek için rol-model olmak; ikincisi, üniversite öğrencilerini ülkenin gerçeği ile tanışmaları ve toplumsal duyarlılık kazanmalarını sağlamak”.

making the program and his broadcasting lasted more than 2 years. He was making special broadcasts on the days such as *Bayram* or Mother's Day, and reading Turkish poems, some quotations from famous Turkish authors and informing his audience what was happening in the "homeland". Besides the Turkish books in Princeton which were more than ten thousand, one of his main sources of knowledge was the newspaper clippings sent every week by Şevval's mother. She sent her daughter and her son-in-law packages of news from Turkish newspapers by clipping them carefully from margins of papers to make a lighter package that would cost less. Every week they received a package of Şevval's mother's selection of important news through which they learned about what was happening in Turkey. According to the couple, the most striking news of those days concerned education and the students, particularly children who were going to school in difficult social and economic circumstances. Nihat and Şevval were comparing themselves with the students in Turkey who were not likely to have the same opportunities with them. They were feeling "lucky" because they had many opportunities while students and children in Turkey were not even able to find a paper to write, especially in those years. One day they read from the news package that there had been an earthquake in Eastern Turkey. The newspaper clippings informed them on the miserable conditions people now had to live in. Not only the news they get from Şevval's mother but also other channels reported how people were helpless and how much they suffered from the earthquake. Something had to be done, but they were asking themselves "how". Led by Nihat, a group of Turkish students in Princeton decided to launch an aid campaign for the victims of the disaster. The attempt was successful and they raised a considerable amount of money and sent it to the victims via an NGO in Turkey, Union of Turkish Engineers. Encouraged by the success of their trial, Nihat and his friends decided to continue to raise funds. However, this time they were not going to raise money for clothes or food, they had decided to mobilize people, particularly Turkish migrants, to send books and stationery to Turkey. He and some of his friends first tried to do this among a small group of students, in order to see the potential problems they could face. They sent the money collected by a few Turkish students to Nihat's brother who was living in Nihat's hometown in Turkey. Nihat's brother bought books and other stuff to be donated to a school in one of the villages of their town. Then they started to correspond with that school,

its teachers and students. The feedbacks were pleasing. So they decided to continue their activity by starting a fund for the elementary schools in Turkey. The roots of FARPS lied in that fund, founded by the Turkish Student Association at Princeton University in 1978. The aim that they agreed on was to “stimulate educational activities in village schools by giving financial support to found a basic library in these schools”.

Still under the Turkish Students Association, the people working for fund raising, including Nihat, started to post the letters and other papers sent to them by those schools to as many Turkish migrants as they could. Donations started to come from their contacts among the Turkish migrant community in the US.

There were many NGOs and charity organizations in the USA and Nihat observed that one of the mechanisms the similar organizations generally used was to provide tax exemptions for donations. People did not pay tax if they donated to some charity organizations. Nihat thought if they used this model, they would increase the amount of donations and also become more institutionalized. He searched the ways to become a tax exempted organization. However, this required a lot of bureaucratic work to be done. Permissions had to be taken from some institutions in the city and from the state and then from the federal state, which meant an overload of work for them. They would find another strategy to solve the issue in due course. They contacted with an association who accepted their checks to be used for sending to the donors. People from that association were writing the fund’s name on their checks under the name of their organization. Then Nihat and his friends took the ones on which the name of the fund was written and cash them. In this way people could have tax exemption, however this did not lead to any increase in either the numbers or the amounts of donates. Nevertheless they continued with this strategy. Nihat was choosing the books to be sent to the schools when he came to Turkey for summer vacations. His activities within the Turkish Student Association went on until he and Şevval returned to Turkey in 1982, but they were to go to the States again 3 years later. This time they were in Boston, the education fund they had founded in the Turkish Student Association in Princeton University had now moved to Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Although he was not a student in the university, Nihat was again the one who mobilized the students for such activities.

During the two years that they stayed there, their efforts for a fund for education got known among the Turks living in Boston. Two years later, in 1987, he came back to Turkey and started to work in the University of U as academic staff. After his return, the activities of the organization which were financially directed by his friends who stayed in the USA were carried out by him in Turkey. Money was being collected in the USA, people who knew him and his friends were giving and raising money for the fund, but in Turkey there was no such organization. The organization's roots were abroad. Every year in October and November, everybody in this network made up of approximately a hundred people gave some money, amount of which was decided by the donors themselves. In return for their donations, Nihat prepared reports for each donor on the management of the money.

Beginning from those years, he and his friends started to visit villages by car. These villages that they had previously contacted were mostly in *Çorum*, *Yozgat* and *Kırşehir* (provinces in the central region of Turkey). They sometimes went to six villages in a day off. During the visits, they donated books which were chosen by Nihat before and bought by the fund. Moreover they tried to perform some experiments through some equipment such as plasma globes that he had first seen in his PhD years in the universities and in science and children's museums in the USA. He was asking questions to children and giving presents, organizing small competitions the reward of which could sometimes be electronic watches with games sent by his friends from the USA. Moreover he told them the success stories, hero or heroine of which was once a poor village child before he/she became a successful scientist. Sometimes some of his friends joined him and interacted with children through the musical instrument he played. The way they interacted with children could change according to the interests of the people joining the small journey. However interaction through hard sciences was the dominant tendency.

While Nihat was visiting the schools randomly, he was sometimes assigned to other provinces for two days to control some examinations centrally done by the state. In these provinces that he was sent, he was suggesting his colleagues in the university or his friends who had returned from the US to visit the village schools. He sometimes even learned the name of other academic staff assigned to work in same province and called them to suggest visiting village schools together. Academicians

who could not join the group sent small amounts of money to meet the basic needs of the children or sometimes sent some stuff such as microscopes that they would not use in their laboratories anymore. He thus started to visit village schools regularly. Nihat says that what he experienced with his friends during these visits influenced him a lot:²²

“In those village visits what I saw was the state’s ignorance of the villages, the emptied villages and neglected schools, but beyond these I realized the importance of touching [having close contact with] children, touching teachers and touching the villagers.”

These experiences encouraged him to think about other alternatives in addition to sending books, because for him, giving books or chatting with children would not be efficient enough to make children enthusiastic about science and to motivate them to get further education. He thought he should visit the schools more often and make these visits more efficient, thus he started to study on a project with some of his colleagues working in the same university and thought about a founding a foundation. Nihat and his friends developed some educational activities in line with their academic interests and practiced them during their visits. They called them *gezici deneyler* (mobile experiments) to draw the children’s attention on science, particularly on hard science. According to the group, children lacked the motivation to continue their education after they complete the compulsory term of education, and the necessary motivation could be provided through the visits they would make to the villages and by arousing children’s curiosity to science. They planned the visits to the village schools regularly to performing the mobile experiments. In the beginning the group was visiting schools and communicating with teachers of the schools through their own personal contacts. However, in order to be regular visitors of many schools, it was necessary to get permission from the Ministry of Education. When Nihat met with a bureaucrat from the Ministry of National Education, the bureaucrat, who also had an academic title in the field of education, told him that no one is officially allowed to go to the schools as long as one has no institutional

²² Bu köy ziyaretlerinde gördüğüm şey şu oldu: Devletin köyleri ihmal edişi, köylerin boşalması, okulların ihmal edilişi ama bunun ötesinde çocuklara dokunmanın köylüye dokunmanın öğretmene dokunmanın ne kadar önemli olduğunu fark ettim.

identity. Nihat was just an academician and the coordinator of voluntarily activities of an organization whose roots were abroad. After dealing with the bureaucratic requirements, a group of academicians led by Nihat founded FARPS in 1998. For him, it was a re-foundation of the education fund of the Turkish Students Association, in Turkey, after twenty years. The new foundation which was mostly based on the Nihat's and his friends' networks in many places, was to have its center in the city of the University of U where he was working.

Now, they were able to get official permissions for their visits to village schools. Now they started to visit schools not only as some academics from universities but also as a foundation, donating books and making activities, with official permissions. In due course, university students also started to take part in the group. An academician who was in the department of Business Administration of the University of U and in the network of Nihat, now the head of the foundation, encouraged her students to participate as volunteers in the activities of foundation, as one of the requirements for the "Business Ethics" course. This was the first attempt to spread the organization among students of the university as a voluntary activity.

Meanwhile, in the years that the foundation was about to be founded by the group, there were many hotly-debated political issues in Turkey. On February 28, 1997, the Turkish military forced Necmettin Erbakan, the Prime Minister with pronounced Islamist tendencies, to resign, and many decisions were issued by the army-lead National Security Council meeting (Turam 2007: 136) . Among the decisions issued by the council was a change on the length of compulsory education, raising it from 5 years to 8. Thus vocational schools where students registered after finishing 5 years of compulsory primary school education (i.e. around age 12) were converted to secondary schools. Importantly, these vocational schools included the *İmam Hatip* schools that trained students to be government-employed imams. This meant that students would go to *İmam Hatip* schools and other vocational schools after they completed 8 years of compulsory education at the age of 15, instead of age of 12. Since education is a contestation area between secularism and political Islamism in Turkey (ibid: 68-88), raising the age of registration to *İmam Hatip* schools had become an issue to be solved by the National Security Council.

In those years the number of *YİBOs* was also increased due to the change in compulsory education system. Since the schools in villages were organized for 5-year education, most of the children that the organization wanted to reach were now sent to these boarding schools. Then, in 2000 the foundation decided to focus on the children at *YİBOs* particular. Nihat who was the head of the organization got permission from the bureaucrat who would later be one of the leading figures in the organization after resigning from his position the same year. As was done with many other NGOs, a protocol was signed between the Ministry of Education and the foundation and they became partners for the projects that the foundation would do in *YİBOs* and village schools. With the support they got from the Ministry, they started to work on the possibilities and limitations they had and what they could do for the children in boarding schools other than visiting, giving books and making experiments. First, the Ministry assigned administrators of some *YİBO* to meet with the head and others from the foundation and give them information about the schools and the problems the organization could be facing, such as the conflict between PKK and military in South-Eastern Turkey.

Changing the organizational structure from a group based on the networks around a university to a foundation who signed a protocol with the ministry to do a shared project, the academicians led by Nihat needed more volunteers. Some students have already been participating in the visits, but they needed to increase the number of volunteers and make more students participate. They, as academicians and founders of a foundation, should possess an additional identity within the universities to get the students to volunteer in their organization. Student clubs with the name “FARPS Student Club” were founded first in the centre of the group, in the University of U. Academicians who are not working at the same university the head was working, but are the member of this network also encouraged their students to participate the volunteer activities that FARPS was carrying out. Secondly it was founded in the University of N. Students and academicians from University of I started another student club, activities of which is almost the same as the organization and named as the FARPS branch. Thus, they all started to be recognized as an entity by the universities in which they are working and can enjoy some facilities of these universities, in addition to accessing the students. Although they became an

independent entity as a foundation, the network within universities brought them together, and their relations were still mostly based on this network. Now the student volunteers and the academician volunteers who are the members of the foundation and student clubs are visiting the regional schools together. The visits are organized by the head and the student club in the University of U. Now the core activity of the foundation and the students clubs is to contact with *YİBOs* though visiting them, going to many different parts of Turkey once a month at weekends, semester and summer vacations. The academicians and the students of undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate levels sometimes visit the village schools as the core academic group had been doing long ago. Each visit is considered as a “project” by the group in which they do *etkinlik* (educational activities), performances of scientific experiments and play, chat and spend time with children during the day, from the time the children wake up to the time they sleep. They also stay in the dormitories of these schools but not in the rooms of children if possible. Although the organization has a protocol with officials, they still have to get permission from officials for each project through correspondences. Thus from beginning (arriving to schools) to end (leaving the schools) is formulated as an independent act, each of which depends on official permission. Their consideration of the activities as “project” is important for volunteers and Nihat, the head of the organization, because the activities, their concerns, the way they approach to children, the instruments they use during their visits and whatever practice a project incorporates are all designed by the organization. For him, FARPS project is peculiar and thus different from most of the other volunteer NGOs working in the field of education. The label “project” has also a connotation in development literature. What Pottier (1993:15-17) named as “project approach” in development is not top-down, locally organized, small and controlled by stage by stage. This approach is unlike the previous development approaches in 1950s and 1960s which is top-down and states and other actors design organize, act and control mostly from one centre (ibid). In the context of the volunteer organization, although they have a standard project design, the projects are local and each was independent events and can be re-arranged according to the need of any school they visit.

A project mainly incorporates, activities, the lectures given by volunteers who are composed of “must activities” and “elective activities”. As the names imply, must activities must be in the activity schedules of each class, and whether a class has any particular elective activity in its schedule is decided by the coordinator of the projects. Must activities are “Mathematics”, “Science or Physics” and “Literature for Children”. The electives are many in number and vary in accordance with the grades of the children. They are “Strategic Games”, “Letters to Future”, “Robot”, “Computer”, “Astronomy”, “Cinema”, “Creative Drama”, “History and Archeology”, “Music”, “Monsters that we can not see” (about health and hygiene), “Play” (for the children at first years in school), “Plays with Music” and “Motivation for Education”. Each activity is designed by academicians and experts. The designers are mostly academicians or people within the network of the organization and/or the leading figures of the organization. In addition to these activities, presentations are made by the head addressing all the children and teachers of the schools visited; books, stationary, toys, material for outdoor activities are donated to schools and children themselves. Moreover, some teachers and children who are selected according to a mathematics exam and volunteers’ observations and invited to the University of U and University I every year in April 23rd and during the summer. Children and teachers stay in the dormitories of the universities and participate in the activities, courses and seminar programs. Academicians from various fields give lectures to children. What is aimed in these invitations is to get the children to know the university and encourage them to set themselves the goal of continuing their education. Furthermore, the organization gives scholarships to schoolgirls in order support them during their high school education. The fund for girls does not only support them economically. Each girl is matched with a female volunteer who talks with the girl on telephone and is expected to guide her particularly about education.

2.3 Volunteers: A Heterogeneous and Homogeneous Body

The questions on who the volunteers are and how they have come together can be replied by only referring to university-based networks. Nearly all volunteers are

undergraduate and graduate students and academicians. One can sometimes see white-collar employees of some companies or public institutions as volunteers in the projects. However they are in fact still from the network of the universities, since some companies or institutions that the volunteers work for may be located in the campus areas, and employees who had been volunteers as students continue to be active in the organization in the other steps of their careers. The head and other leading figures who are academicians plus the student clubs play a key role in introducing the organization and in the gathering of volunteers. The head arranges public meetings in different universities, institutions, in many organizations and in some companies that he has personal and professional relations with the employers or employees. Demanding one hour of their lectures from the instructors of some must courses of many departments in the university, he makes presentations presenting the volunteer work. He also spares some time in his own courses to introduce the activities of the organization. Like him, other leading figures also try to make their activity known among their students and in their other networks. In addition to these, student clubs through which activities are introduced to the students in the universities shoulder the gathering and organization of volunteers. While most of the volunteers are undergraduate students from University of U, there are also some volunteers who are students at other universities that do not have the student club of the organization. Beside these, students from the faculty of education can apply to the organization through the student clubs in order to fulfill the requirements of the “Community Service” courses²³. Most of the members of the student club are undergraduate students from the faculty of engineering in the University of U where the head of the organization works. The student club in the University of N is organized among the students of the faculty of education, whose dean Mustafa is another leading figure of the organization.

The organization is a homogeneous entity in the sense that they are middle-class, which is mainly identified through education and work in Turkey (Bora 2011: 182). However, class habitus is not such an external and coercive constraint that makes the whole experiences of individual agents similar to each other (Corcuff 2007: 376). In other words, personal histories, experiences and practices are neither mere

²³ A must course in the curriculum of all faculties of education in Turkey.

constructions of the subjects (Margolis 1999: 65), nor shaped only through the objectivity of hidden structures (ibid: 67). In this sense the homogeneities within the group incorporate heterogeneities in terms of experiences and personal histories or vice versa. Diversity in the volunteers' dispositions and how these are perceived are particularly manifested in reference to the interaction between them and the children. For instance, the feelings and practice Aelya experienced during her first project, library expense of which was sponsored by senior students in her department as a memory of their graduation, indicates how interactions are shaped in this sense. While telling her impressions of the projects done in two boarding schools in orum, she mentioned her conversation with a girl in the "Painting" activity:

"There is a famous Italian artist, Arcimboldo. He paints portrait heads using the images of fruits, vegetables and flowers. I thought I could make use of these in the painting activity. It was a good activity. Since we dealt with the fruits and vegetables, a child asked me 'do you know how to cook?' I said I didn't. She told me that she did, and told me how she cooked at the times she was at home. I felt ashamed."²⁴

Fruits and vegetables constituted a reference point in the sense that they had different meanings for the volunteer and the girl in their daily life. In this case, the difference in experiences and practices is constructed through the intersection of gender, class and urban and rural lifestyles and identities. The comparison between experiences, particularly concerning the burdens of the child engenders the feeling of shame that many volunteers often put into words. On the other hand, some volunteers emphasize their own experiences that are similar to these children, which better enables them to empathize with them. Yavuz, a postgraduate student in the Faculty of Education, is among those who think he has an advantage in understanding the children to some extent:

²⁴ "Ünlü bir italyan bir ressam var, Arcimboldo. Sebze, meyve ve iek resimlerinden yararlanarak insan portresi yapıyor. Resim etkinliğinde bundan yararlanabilirim diye düşünmüştüm. Çocuklara meyve ve sebzelerden çocuk portresi yaptırmaya çalıştım. Güzel bir etkinlik oldu. Sebzelerle meyvelerle uğraşınca, bir çocuk bana 'sen yemek yapmayı biliyor musun' diye sordu. Bilmediğimi söyledim. O bildiğini söyledi, evde olduğu zamanlarda nasıl yemek yaptığımı anlattı. Çok utandım."

“The child says, he/she talks about the elevator, saying “I’ve never seen it”. ‘[Yavuz] ağabey, have you ever seen a skyscraper?’ He hasn’t seen any skyscraper in his/her life. Had I seen it till I came for my university education? I hadn’t seen such a vast field, I hadn’t seen a place with so many buildings together either. I also saw all these in the university. So I see a parallelism between my life and theirs. I have another advantage. I worked during my childhood, in the greengrocer, in tobacco stores, I worked for years. I sold bagels, I did shoe-shining, I did all these things. This provides me with something positive about the lives of the children. I also did similar things to you but you [the children] are stronger than me because in addition to all that you’re studying in a boarding school, you are struggling to study in a boarding school. ”²⁵

Despite Yavuz’s views on positioning himself with reference to experiences likely to be common, being a student in a boarding school is another significant factor which incorporates another social ground for subordination in addition to poverty and rurality. The children are being pitied for being distant from families’ affection and care, with limited facilities the schools provides. Such identification practices that the volunteers make in reference to the other constitute one of their logical grounds for volunteer activity and the way they figure out the dynamics behind the problems and the solutions offered, which I will try to explain in subsequent pages. In addition to these identification processes, their practices, experiences and interactions give an opportunity to observe the volunteers’ constitution of class through their life styles. Towards the end of a project done in a boarding school in Sivas, three volunteers were waiting and chatting in the activity room. Derya, a senior student in the department of mechanical engineering, said that the building, classes, garden, toilets - which is built by *Eczacıbaşı*- and other physical conditions and facilities of the school

²⁵ “Diyor ki çocuk ben diyor işte asansörü, anlatıyor, görmedim. ‘[Yavuz] ağabey gökdelen gördün mü?’ Hayatında hiç gökdelen görmemiş. Ben gördüm mü üniversiteye gelene kadar? Bu kadar büyük bir alan görmedim, bu kadar binanın bir arada olduğu bir yer görmedim. Ben de üniversitede gördüm. Yani kendi hayatımla onların hayatı arasında paralellik kuruyorum. Bir de şöyle bir avantajım var benim. Çocukluğumda, yıllarca manavlık tekel bayiliği, çocukluğumda hep çalıştım ben. Simit satmak, ayakkabı boyamak, bunların hepsini yaptım. Bu bir artı sağlıyor bana çocukların hayatına dair. Ben de aslında benzer bir şey yaptım ama siz benden daha güçlüsünüz çünkü üstüne bir de yatılı okudunuz, yatılı okumaya çalışıyorsunuz.”

were new, clean and well-designed compared to most of the other schools she had seen before. On this issue, Tayfun, a student in his preparatory year and a former YİBO student who got to know FARPS in his boarding school years, stressed *Eczabaşı*'s choice on the building style, preferring flush toilets rather than squat toilets widely used in Turkey. Another volunteer, Erdal who is also in his preparatory year commented on Tayfun's emphasis as such: "That's better. Children should learn using flush toilet and knives and forks because they can't learn them at home"²⁶. Tayfun was very surprised with this comment: "What? But one is not superior to the other"²⁷. Squat toilet is perceived as a symbol of the rural and lower class lifestyle children acquire through their families. Moreover, children are thought to be the ones with an opportunity to change and learn urban, middle class practices thanks to the boarding schools. Tayfun's view on rejecting the hegemonic positioning of urban and middle class lifestyle indicates the diversity within the group in terms of identification and perspectives. Positionality of the volunteers are produced and reproduced through the individual interactions, experiences and practices of each volunteer with reference to children, but also through the processes and practices through which people meet with the organization and learn to volunteer.

2.4 Finance and Organizational Structure

Beside background story and identities of the volunteers, finance and organizational structure are other crucial factors that characterize the volunteer group. The financial sources and some expenditures of the organization are met through donations, sponsorships and activities organized by student clubs and organizational relations between the organization and the University of U. The organization has no paid employees. All work, including the bureaucratic and financial procedures of the foundation such as bookkeeping, is done voluntarily. The core expenses of the foundation are the scholarships for the schoolgirls and the projects costs.

²⁶ "Böyle daha iyi. Çocuklar alafrağta tuvalet kullanmasını da, çatal bıçak kullanmasını da öğrenmeli, evde öğrenemezler çünkü"

²⁷ "Nasıl yani? Biri diğerinden daha üstün değil ki..."

The scholarship for the girls is composed of three pillars: donors, female volunteers and the girls. The girls do not know anything about the donors and they think that they are getting the scholarship from the foundation. Among the donors there are academicians, most of whom are from the network of the group.

According to organization website In *YİBO* projects, FARPS donates approximately 500-700 books to the library of each school. The organization sets up an *anı kütüphanesi* (library of memory) for the people who donate the cost of the books chosen by the organization and bought on behalf of the donors. Volunteers seal the names of the donors on the first pages of books and a framed document on which the name FARPS and the name of donor are written is hanged on the wall of the library. Moreover, during projects the organization gives science magazines and books on popular science to each child in every school, chosen in accordance with the ages of children. The name of FARPS and the names of the donors of these books are also sealed on the first pages. They also donate toys and set up play rooms where the children who are at the first grades of schools can play. Successful students of the boarding schools visited are given further presents. The successful students are decided upon lists provided by the school administrations. These presents are school bags, notebooks and stationery. In addition to these, the organization donates strategy game sets, mini chess sets, goalposts, origami paper, block flutes, kites, balls, skipping ropes, frisbees and other material for outdoor games. The total cost of one project is 3900 Euro, but the donors can choose to meet only the cost of some components of the projects, such as cost of books for the library or that of the play rooms. Most of the donations are not in large amounts. The majority of the donors are individuals from the network of the group. Among them there are many academicians and many companies or employees of companies. Some regular donors are the companies in which the head works as an adviser. In addition to these, many senior students of some departments in the universities collect money among themselves to meet the cost of a project or just a library, as a “memory of graduation”. These students can also join the projects as volunteers, if they want. Furthermore, an important amount of donation is given by the NGOs or funds of Turkish immigrants, for instance a fund founded by Turkish Americans is one of the regular donors. The costs of some projects are also met by the organization itself

through the incomes of some events such as concerts and some performances that student clubs organize at their campus. Some expenses of the projects, i.e. the transportation of all the materials (books, toys, etc.) and volunteers' life insurances during the projects are met through the sponsorship of a courier company and an insurance firm.

While receiving donations and sponsorship, the most important criterion for the organization is to take support only from individuals, groups, companies or organizations that no one would perceive as "political". On a return trip, in the bus, the head, Nihat, was explaining the student volunteers how they should contact with the companies and people who can be sponsors or donors. He said that once *Ülker*, a major company in the field of food production, said to be linked with Islamic capital, suggested sponsoring a project. The people around him strongly objected this idea. They said that the organization cannot take any money from a firm which is "the enemy of Atatürk". The head connected this anecdote with the example of a volunteer who was wearing an Atatürk rosette while going to a boarding school for a project. He had warned the volunteer and explained him that he should not wear such a symbol because FARPS does not have any political agenda, and in the schools that they visited they were all perceived as members of FARPS, not as independent individuals. Then he linked these examples to the organizations strategy of finance:²⁸ "Yes, we do not wear an Atatürk rosette while going to schools, we have no political stance. But [while getting sponsorships] we cannot ignore what Atatürk has done for this country". Hence, *Ülker* or other such companies cannot sponsor the foundation because of their engagement with political Islam.

Nihat went on explaining other strategies. Some time ago their donors who are in Australia informed him about a donation offer from the Soros foundation. He said that at those times he had no knowledge about the foundation, he thought to accept the money. However, he later changed his mind:²⁹ "when I learned that it is an

²⁸ "Tamam, okullara giderken Atatürk rozeti takmıyoruz, hiçbir politik duruşumuz yok. Ama [sponsor alırken] Atatürk bu ülke için yaptıklarını da göz ardı edemeyiz" dedi.

²⁹ "Çalıştığı ülkelerde hükümetleri değiştirmek için çalışan, CIA bağlantılı bir kuruluş olduğunu öğrendiğimde, bu bağıştan vazgeçtim"

institution that aims to change the governments in the countries where it is active and has relations with the CIA, I rejected the offer.”

The volunteers are pleased with the strategies of FARPS in financing the projects and other activities. For instance Aliye who is an undergraduate student in the faculty of education thinks that it is important to be *tarafsız* (not from any side, non-political) while evaluating the supports given from some institutions and she compare FARPS with another volunteer organization:³⁰

“For instance we go to lots of places [organizations], for instance TEGV [*Türkiye Eğitim Gönüllüleri Vakfı* Educational Volunteers Foundation of Turkey] receives supports from political parties, be it CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, People’s Republican Party) or political writers, I know that they always support to them. But we do not accept their support. [...] I think it is good not to take sides. Whatever party [Nihat] *Hoca* supports personally, he does not take [FARPS] into that field. He certainly has political thoughts for himself but he does not reflect these to FARPS.”

Rejecting any support from political parties, or companies, groups and individuals that the organization perceives as “political”, is one of the strategies to be away from the boundary of “the political.” The head is also cautious about taking funds from big companies, because he does not want FARPS to be use as an advertisement by any company, which might politicize the image of FARPS in relation to the political position of the company.

Financing the expenses of the foundation is also strongly related with the organizational structure and interrelation among the foundation, the student clubs and a Centre in the University of U. Firstly, all books, stationery, toys and other materials to be sent to schools are stored and packaged in a place that the university provides as a room for the student club. Before projects, all the necessary preparations are done by the volunteers of the student club in this depot.

³⁰ “Mesela gidiyoruz bir sürü yere [kuruluşa], mesela TEGV’ e siyasi partilerden destek geliyor. CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) olsun ya da siyasi yazarlar hep böyle desteklediğini biliyorum onları. Ama biz kabul etmiyoruz. [...] Tarafsızlık bence güzel bir şey [Nihat] hoca hangi partiden olursa olsun ama [FARPS]’ı katmıyor içine. Onun da bir siyasi görüşü vardır ama [FARPS]’a yansıtmıyor.”

Secondly, the volunteers' transportation to the schools in various parts of Turkey is provided by the buses of this center in the university. The S. and S. Center, which is another partner of the projects, was founded by Nihat and Şevval in 2005 in the University of U, funded by a state institution. They designed the center incorporating 3 areas of activity which are "projects for accessing the society", "social politics" and a science museum. The regulations of this center specify its aim as creating *farkındalık* (awareness) and *ilgi* (interest) about science and promoting the scientific way of thinking in the society. In accordance with this aim, the center publishes books, makes surveys, organizes meetings and does some projects based on the idea of "touching science". In its connotation this means that the society should understand the development of science and its position today through the museum and through some activities, experiments and other performances aimed to make people see, touch and perceive science, especially hard sciences. In accordance with this aim, the scope of "accessing to the society" incorporates the projects of FARPS and the performances and presentations of research assistants of the center, done in elementary and high schools, in fairs and even in malls. Moreover, groups of students are brought to the science museum to see the experiments depicting the scientific principles experienced in daily life. The financial contribution of the center as a partner of the FARPS projects is the buses called "science bus," used in the transportation of the volunteers to *YİBOs*. One employee of the center told me the following about the organizational and financial relation between the two entities³¹

"[The center] has something called access to society project. Actually [the projects] are incorporated by [the center] but the financial contribution of [the center] is only to give the bus itself, it doesn't even provide the cost of

³¹ "[Merkez]'in şöyle bir şeyi var "toplum erişim projesi" olarak geçiyor. Aslında [projeler] [merkez]in altında ama hani ekonomik olarak döndürülme kısmında [merkez]in tek desteği otobüsün kendisini vermek, yakıtını da vermiyor. Otobüsler oraya [merkeze] ait zaten, [ama] otobüsler de net rakamları bilmiyorum ama, şu kadar yılda şu kadar çocuğa ulaşacağız vaadiyle alındı. Bu grup olmasa otobüslerin alınması gerçekleşemeyecekti. Bağışlarla dönüyor diğer taraflar. Ama keşke [merkez] çok daha fazla destek verse, zaten [merkez]in amacı topluma hizmet etmek. Destek vermeli diye düşünüyorum. [...] [T]oplumun bilimsel farkındalık seviyesini arttırma, bilimle toplumu barıştırmak bunun için etkinlikler düzenlemek amacı bu."

oil. The buses are owned by there [the center], [but] the buses, I don't know the exact numbers but, they are bought thanks to the word given that we will reach that much children in that much year. The buses could not have been bought if this group did not exist. The other stuff are carried out through donations. But, I wish [the center] supported [the organization] much more, after all, the aim of [the center] is to serve the society. I think it should support. [...] [T]he aim is to enhance the awareness of society about science, to organize activities in order to reconcile science with society.”

As universities cannot have the authority to buy buses according to the regulations on their budgets, the buses were granted by the state with Şevval's extraordinary efforts. Before these were granted, the center did not have buses and so the organization was using the existing old buses of the university which broke down many times during the journeys to boarding schools. Moreover, the center could demand those buses only on working days. For these reasons, Şevval prepared a file introducing FARPS and their aims with many photos of the projects and the children from *YİBOs*. She tried many times to meet with undersecretary of the ministry in charge and asked them to grant buses to the center in order to be used in school visits. She finally persuaded the authorities to provide the buses by meeting with many people, including some ministers. Nihat thinks that Şevval's success is related to their position concerning politics³²:

“While [Şevval] was doing all these work she didn't care about the name of any party, she talked to people from AKP and got their appreciation and respect. This is how they gave the money, [Şevval] *Hoca* talked to them. It wouldn't be easy for any other person to be able to get [the grant]. It was Şevval who talked to all of them.”

According to Nihat, if Şevval or the organization had any political engagement, especially anything against AKP, they would not be able to take the grant for the buses. He thinks that the reason why they got appreciation and respect from many people, even from the members of AKP is their “non-political” stance.

³² “[Şevval] bu işleri yaparken hiç parti filan bakmadı, AKP'lilerle konuştu ve onların sevgisini saygısını kazandı. Onlar o şekilde parayı verdi, [Şevval] hoca konuştu. Bir başkası gidip [desteği] alamazdı kolay kolay. Şevval konuştu hepsiyle.”

Besides characterizing, financial and organizational structure of the organization as a whole indicate how volunteers and organization construct themselves basing on their definitions of the categories of “political” and “non-political”. These structures - organic relations with university and the features of donors from whom they provide support- also constitute the grounds of their strategies and negotiations in order to avoid politics, which will be explained in next chapter.

CHAPTER III

SEEMING as “POLITICAL” or NOT: STRATEGIES and NEGOTIATIONS FOR DISTANCING SELVES FROM POLITICS

3.1 Representation and External Relations

As a volunteer, after I opened the door of a class to do an activity, the first thing I was to do was to introduce FARPS, introduce myself and my department. The following step expected from me was to write the address of FARPS on a corner of the board and suggest and encourage the children to send letters to FARPS with the postcards and sealed envelopes that volunteers would distribute in the end of the school day. The address was written on the back side of the ID card hung on my neck, which was given to me in the bus while we were on the way to the school. On the front side, my name was written in the biggest size, my family name written in smaller and then the name of FARPS, “University of U.” and “S. and S. Center” were in the smallest size. I turned over the card and wrote the address as it was given on the back side: First “[FARPS] *Vakfi* (Foundation)” and then the post office in U University campus where FARPS had a post box, the number of the p.o. box, and lastly I wrote the name of the city.

A few hours later, I was in the activity room which asked from the school administration beforehand to be reserved for the volunteers to rest and to leave their activity equipments. The coordinator of the project, Ridvan who is student in the faculty of engineering in the University of U warned the ones who were volunteering for the first time not to write the word “foundation” on the board while writing the address. This meant that we should have just written “FARPS” without its “*Vakif*”. Then the bell rang, everyone in the activity room looked at the activity schedule to see the class in which they would do their activity and then looked at the

plan of the school to learn where their class was located. Thanks to the schedule, which was prepared long before the project via a computer program (which was developed by some volunteers to be used in projects), and the school plan (which was roughly drawn by a volunteer as soon as we arrived in the school); everyone saw where they should go and went there rapidly. I also looked at the schedule, but I did not have an activity in that hour, so I started to wait for the next activity the coordinator assigned me to. There were four other volunteers waiting for next activity hour like me. Two of them were Nevzat and Rya who were students in the University of U. It was Rya's first project and she was asking some questions to Nevzat who had been volunteering for FARPS for three years.³³

-The schools that we go, how are they chosen?

-[Nihat] Hoca makes the decisions, the schools are decided a year before, the necessary correspondences are done, it is already known where and when we will go next year.

-Really? [...] Well there is a student club, but a foundation too, if I am not wrong. How come? I couldn't understand FARPS exactly.

-Yes there is a student club, but a foundation too, its head being [Nihat] Hoca. Some correspondences are necessary to be able to go to schools; donations are collected, there is a fund to support girls; scholarships are given to female students; all of these are done by the foundation. But the main work is done by the student club. We have a depot; we do all the

³³ -Gideceđimiz okullar nasıl seđiliyor?

-[Nihat] hoca belirliyor, bir yıl nceden belirlenip gerekli yazıřmalar yapılıyor, seneye nereye ne zaman gideceđimiz belli.

-yle mi? [...] peki bir đrenci topluluđu var, ama bir vakıf da var, yanlış anlamadıysam. Nasıl oluyor? Ben anlamadım tam olarak [FARPS]'ı.

-Yani đrenci topluluđu var ama bir vakıf da var, yani [Nihat] Hoca. Okullara gitmek iin yazıřmalar gerekiyor; bađıřlar toplanıyor; kız destekleme fonu var, kız đrencilere burslar veriliyor btn bunları vakıf yapıyor. Ama asıl iřleri đrenci topluluđu yapıyor, depomuz var orada tm hazırlıkları yapıyoruz. Gnlller đrenci topluluđuna geliyor, depoda alıřıyorlar, yani aslında daha ok đrenci topluluđu [FARPS].

preparations there. Volunteers come to the student club and work in the depot, [FARPS] is thus mainly a student club.

So the organization does not want to be referred to as a *vakif*. They present themselves as volunteers from a university. While introducing himself in his presentations, Nihat was saying that he is the head of the FARPS foundation, but immediately adding his academic position in U University in almost all the presentations he was making for the teachers of the school to introduce the group:³⁴

“We, as the foundation of [FARPS], are not political, we are no *tariqa*, we are not masons. We are academicians and students who are coming from mostly [University of U.] and the other universities, [University of N.] and [University of I.]. We just want the YİBO children to get education and be more successful than us.”

Like Nihat, all volunteers were using their identity of being a student, graduate or an academic staff of a university. According to the members of the organization, presenting themselves through a *vakif* may easily place them within the category of a political entity. Being solely a *vakif* is perceived to be “political” because of the rise of political Islam and its strong engagement with non-governmental organizations as a legal framework (Grigoriadis, 2009: 50). However, a link with science and university enables one to seem less political or maybe non-political, and thus more legitimate. There can be some specific “political” perceptions about the people connected to the universities in general, or about some particular universities, but, according to the head, the volunteers of FARPS can change this perception by talking no politics with the people in the schools, not criticizing anything and looking just like the people in the schools. On the way to a boarding school in Central Anatolia, he talked about the “prejudices” they face³⁵:

³⁴ “Biz [FARPS] vakfı olarak, politik değiliz, tarikat değiliz, mason değiliz. Biz çoğunlukla [U. Üniversitesi]’den ve diğer üniversitelerden, [N. Üniversitesi] ve [I. Üniversitesi]’den gelen hocalar ve öğrencileriz. Biz sadece YİBO çocuklarının okuyup bizden çok daha başarılı olmasını istiyoruz.”

³⁵ “Çok özel bir iznimiz var, ve 10 yıldır hiçbir sorun yaşamadan devam ediyoruz. Örneğin E. YİBO’nun müdürü bize önyargılı yaklaşarak engellemek istedi, valilikten de yazı gerekir diye ısrarcı. Böyle bir şeye zorunlu olmadığımız halde valilikten izni aldım. Ancak [FARPS]ı ve gönüllüleri

“We have a very special permission and for ten years we’ve never had any problem with anybody. For example the administrator of *E. YİBO* [a town in the south of Turkey] approached us with prejudices and tried to stop us, insisting that an official permission should be taken from the provincial governorship as well. Although we don’t have such an obligation I did get the permission from the governorship. But when he saw [FARPS] and the volunteers he apologized from me. When they heard “they are coming from U University” they were expecting people with miniskirts or beards. As they [people in some schools] have an ideological approach, that’s what they expect from us as well.”

Any word, behavior, symbol or style which can be perceived as ideological might cause them to lose their permission and thus affect their relations with not only one but many schools and children. This approach also effects the relations with other actors such as the media. Almost all volunteers and leading figures in the organization are against any representation of FARPS in the media. The core principle that determines relations with any actor, including schools, bureaucrats, NGOs and media, is to represent themselves and the organization as “non political”.

Being represented in the media especially means being a “*taraf*” (“side”) and being political. In some projects, the local press and sometimes the national press if they are in that province wanted to talk with the volunteers and/or the head. For instance, in Ağrı, reporters from *Anatolian Agency* and *Taraf* Newspaper came to the school where the group was volunteering. In such cases, the head wants volunteers not to speak with the press and inform him and the coordinator of the situation. He explained the moment of facing the press as such³⁶:

“Of course we shouldn’t prevent them from doing their job as they are doing a public service. I told them that we were only there for the children and that I didn’t want to make any declaration. Then they even said [smiling as he

gördükten sonra benden özür diledi. [U. Üniversitesinden] geliyorlar diye duyunca onlar mini etekli, sakallı insanlar bekliyorlarmış. Kendileri de ideolojik yaklaşıtları için bizi de öyle bekliyorlar.”

³⁶ “Elbette onlar kamu hizmeti yaptıkları için görevlerini engellememeliyiz. Orada sadece çocuklar için bulunduğumuzu ve bir demeç vermek istemediğimi söyledim. Hatta böyle olunca [anlatırken gülümsüyor] “hocam kötü bir şey yazmayacağız”, dediler. Ama ben yine de onların istediği gibi bir demeç vermedim.”

quotes] “*hocam*, we won’t write anything bad”. I still didn’t make the declaration they expected.”

Since for him it is not possible to be represented as they really are –non political-, the strategy of not appearing on the media at all is better for them.

During a meeting with volunteers, just a few days before a project that was to be done in a boarding school in Central Anatolia, the head was talking about the rules the volunteers must obey, as he did before all projects. I was present in the meeting as a volunteer who would join that project. There were many volunteers, among them the ones who would join a project for the first time. Thus there was a need for the head to re-emphasize how volunteers should communicate with anybody they would meet during the project³⁷:

“In these schools there are many teachers that are graduates of *imam-hatip* high schools or *Ilahiyat* [Faculty of Theology]. Old teachers, because of the new system of rotation, their places [of duty] are changed. We should never get into any discussion about political issues. We have a very special permission from the ministry and this hasn’t changed with the term of any government. The staff there will certainly ask you why we are there and we are going there only for the education of children. If local or national media appears during the project, channel them either to me or the coordinator. One week ago, *Vakit* Newspaper [a newspaper known with its Islamist and aggressive line] claimed that among the books *ÇYDD*³⁸ [*Çağdaş Yaşamı*

³⁷ “Bu okullarda imam-hatip ya da ilahiyat mezunu, tarikat üyesi kimseler çok. Eski öğretmenler, rotasyon usulü çıktığı için, yerleri değiştiriliyor. Asla politik bir mevzuda tartışmaya girmemeliyiz. Bizim bakanlıktan aldığımız çok özel bir iznimiz var ve bu hiçbir iktidarla değişmedi. Oradaki görevliler size neden geldiğimizi mutlaka soracaklardır ve biz oraya sadece çocukların okuması için gidiyoruz. Proje sırasında yerel veya Ulusal basın mensupları gelirse koordinatöre veya bana yönlendiriniz. Bir hafta *Vakit* gazetesi *ÇYDD*’nin Ordu Ünye’ye gönderdiği kitaplar arasında pornografik ve misyonerlikle ilgili kitapların çıktığını ortaya attı. *ÇYDD* web sitesinde buna karşılık bir açıklama yaptı, yalandı. Araya karışabilecek kitaplara karşılık öğretmenlere bir mektup bıraktıklarını söylüyor. Ben de sanmıyorum. Medyada çıkınca bu tarz yakıştırmaların kaçınılmaz olduğunu söyledi. Bir şeyler aramak isteyenler mutlaka bir şey bulurlar, hele bir de [U üniversitesi]den geliyor olmanın insanlara başka şeyler de ifade ediyor. Solcular geliyor diye düşünüyorlar.”

³⁸ A publicly known Kemalist NGO whose area of activity is education.

Destekleme Derneği] sent to Ünye, Ordu, there were some missionary and pornographic ones. [...] *ÇYDD* rejected the claim in their web site. They are saying that they always leave letters for the teachers to separate the unrelated books. I also don't think such a thing happened. Once one is seen on the media, such claims are inevitable. Those who are looking for something certainly do find it, especially when one comes from [U University], that also means different things to people. They think that leftists are coming.”

The permissions were taken from the ministry of AKP government, and thus if any discussions with those teachers who are pro-AKP take place might risk their protocol with the ministry. Even though they are perceived as “leftist” and/or “secular” because of the representation of their universities, they should not show any symbol in their speech, clothing and behavior. Although, according to Nihat, the claims about *ÇYDD* are wrong, it is only natural to see such news about them because of that NGO's close relations with the media. If it is necessary to contact the press, they should do this within the boundary of the “non political”.

On the way to some schools in the South-East of Turkey in my first project, Ilgaz, a member of the student club and a third-year student in the Faculty of Architecture in U University was introducing FARPS, particularly the student club, its activities and its financing. “For example we did not have our concert advertised on *Zaman*, and we thought not to have it advertised on *Cumhuriyet*, either”³⁹, she said. For her the criterion to be non-political is to present oneself neither as Kemalist nor as Islamist. She added that they did get sponsorship for the concerts, but they nevertheless took the criterion of being non-political into consideration. She complained that despite their efforts to be non-political, some student clubs in their university criticized them.⁴⁰

³⁹ “Mesela Zaman’a konser ilanı vermedik, Cumhuriyet’e de vermemeyi düşündük.”

⁴⁰ “Eğitim topluluğu sponsor almıyor, mesela onlar bize soruyorlar [neden sponsor aldığımızı]. Biz sponsor alıyoruz çünkü daha çok çocuğa ulaşmamız lazım. Artık kimin ne olduğu belli değil Levi’s giymek zorundasın Kentucky Fried Chicken yemek zorundasın. Bizim sponsor aldığımız insanların kapitalist olduğunu biz de biliyoruz. Ama dedim ya artık kimin ne olduğu belli değil.”

“Education Club does not get sponsors, for instance they ask us [why we have sponsors]. We have sponsors because we have to reach more children. It is not known anymore who is who and what is what, you have to wear Levi’s, you have to eat Kentucky Fried Chicken [American brands usually protested by leftist students]. We also know that the people who sponsor us are capitalists. But as I said, who is who isn’t known anymore.”

The most important criterion while drawing the boundary between political and non-political is, not to be seen in either a Kemalist or a political-Islamist newspaper. But the critiques on sponsorship are not seen as relevant for the boundary between political and non-political. Since everyone has to live in a capitalist world, including the ones who criticize their receiving sponsorship, this discussion is out of the frame of being political according to Ilgaz

3.2 Rules and Training

The organization does not have a clear training process. Many of the student volunteers start working with the organization by doing volunteer work in their depot. In some exceptional cases, some people join the projects directly, without working in the depot. These people learn what the organization does in the schools through meetings held just before the projects. In these meetings people are informed about the projects, *YİBOs*, the children and the rules that a volunteer has to obey throughout the projects, and they share the activities they will do with the children. The volunteers who directly participate in the projects are usually the ones who are both donors and volunteers. Those who make library donations as memories of graduation and company employees who make donation are among such examples. Although there are people who could join the volunteer projects without a preliminary process, all volunteers, without any exception, have to learn and obey the project rules and the procedure of doing the activities assigned to volunteers. This information is given through meetings, booklets and other people who had volunteered in many projects before. Before explaining the rules and strategies followed in the schools, I will introduce the other tasks that most of the volunteers in student clubs do as a preliminary step for the projects.

Every weekend, volunteers work in a depot located in the campus of U University. It is a large place with a high ceiling, and all the walls are covered with metal shelves from bottom to top. There are also shelves in the middle of the room, separating the place into two. The first thing to see is the many huge boxes filling the shelves. I later learned that the place used to be a laboratory of the university, and then it was converted to a depot and given to the student club.

When I went to the store for the first time, there were five people inside, doing something with books, notebooks, envelopes, cards and back packs. One of these students that I had met before was Zeliha who was an undergraduate student of sociology. She greeted me and explained what they were doing. Then she introduced me to Şafak who explained the volunteers their tasks according to a working list. Şafak is an engineer working for a company in the defense industry and a post-graduate student in the University of U. By looking at his list, he told me what I could do on that day. Firstly he showed me a big pack of envelopes in different sizes and told me to separate the small ones from the standard sized ones because they generally did not use the small ones. On the envelopes the name of “UNICEF” was written. The volunteer beside me was dealing with the “UNICEF” cards which were very colorful and varied. I asked him what they did with cards and envelopes. He explained me that five cards, envelopes and a letter from FARPS were put inside all the books that would be given to every child in *YIBOs*. After I finished my work, I tried to help the volunteer group near me. On their large table, there were lots of books on many issues such as earthquakes, scientists, airplanes, cars, DNA, scientific experiments, electricity and magnetism, planets etc. All the books were the publications of the institution, *Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu* (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey). The first volunteer took a book and sealed the names of donors on its first page. Then another one sealed the name of the organization with its address on the same page. The third one put five UNICEF cards and envelopes attached each other, and a paper enveloped and sealed with the name of the organization. Then he gave the book to the last volunteer in the line to place the books in the boxes which were classified according to the grades of children. The paper in the envelope was a standard letter from FARPS addressing the children. It was half an A4 paper, written on both sides. The letter was an

explanation for children on why the organization was doing such activities and giving books. Although this is not its aim, the letter manifests the aim of the organization and its discourse to the newcomer volunteers. The writer tries to advise the children to imagine, to be curious, and to read more: “Close your eyes and make a wish... Will you believe us if we say you will be getting closer to your dreams as you read more?”⁴¹ Then the letter encourages the children to write letters to the organization and its volunteers by giving the post address of the volunteers. Towards the end of the letter there is an advice to its reader:

“Do not forget that we can overcome all the troubles/difficulties we have as long as we <<read>>, trust yourself, study hard with all your energy, thinking you are able to be a world class person against all odds. Never stop fighting, never give in and never give up.”⁴² (emphasis in the original)

The paragraph gives the message to its target audience and the volunteers that education is the only solution for these children in order to overcome some issues that the letter defines as *sıkıntı* (troubles or difficulties which makes one depressed). Another message one can get is that the target group can get education only through studying hard, being successful at school and reading lots of books. Being a newcomer, what I get as third message is about the word *okumak* which is strongly emphasized, as the writer wants to draw the audience’s attention. The emphasized word is used in a double meaning in Turkish. In addition to its literal translation as “to read”, it means “to get education”, as well. Thus it may be more accurate to translate the word as “education”. However, the literal equivalent of “education” is *eğitim* in Turkish, which is a word that the writer did not prefer to use. *Education* would not give the same feeling with the word *okumak*. In this context, *okumak* and *eğitim* incorporate each other; however *eğitim* may not be necessarily got through the act of reading books. It comprises other acts such as doing practice, observation and apprenticeship. As a newcomer, I thought that the ideal the letter aims its

⁴¹ “Kapat gözlerini ve bir dilek tut...Okudukça, tuttuğun dileğe yaklaşacağını söylesek bize inanırmısın?”

⁴² “Bütün sıkıntılarımızı ancak <<okuyarak>> aşacağımızı unutmayın, kendinize güvenin, her türlü zor şartlarda dahi dünya çapında bireyler olabileceğinizi düşünerek tüm gücünüzle çalışın, asla yılmayın, asla pes etmeyin ve asla vazgeçmeyin.”

audience to internalize is not to acquire an occupation, but it is rather about the audiences' thoughts, perceptions or perspectives.

After I finished all the works assigned, Şafak took my name and wrote it on a paper which was a list of the volunteers who participated in the works in the depot. I later learned that one of the important criteria in order to get in the group of volunteers who will join the projects is the number of days one works in the preparations.

Two weeks later an email was sent to all the volunteers in the e-mail list about subscriptions to a project which would last fifteen days. In order to join a project, it was necessary to register and create an account in the website of the organization. After that, the system expected one to sign in to the project and check the boxes from the list of activities which he/she could do with the children. All applications were evaluated by the head who had already taken me into the list for that project when I met him to take his informed consent. After a while I got another e-mail about a meeting which would be held with the volunteers who were chosen for the project.

3.2.1 Melting the Distinction of “us” and “them”

Moderated by the head, the meeting I mention above was about the distribution of activities and tasks to the volunteers and some rules which we have to obey during the projects. After he informed each volunteer about the activity they were chosen to conduct in the project, he started to talk about the rules: “First of all the clothes that you will be wearing are very important. You should choose clothes that will not create prejudices against us. [...] We should avoid anything that would create the distinction of ‘us’ and ‘them’”⁴³

The core logic behind the rules is based on the question of how the volunteers are perceived by others, particularly by the staff in *YİBOs*, the residents of the places around, and the villagers. Rules regulate how to behave, how to dress and how to

⁴³ “Öncelikle projeye gelirken giyeceğiniz kıyafetler çok önemli. Bizim hakkımızda önyargı yaratmayacak kıyafetler seçmelisiniz. [...] Biz ve öteki ayrımını yaratacak her şeyden kaçınmalıyız”

communicate during projects. For instance, volunteers have to dress modestly with no accessories, no showy clothes, no make-up for females, and no long hair and no beard for males. Many volunteers think that the head has a rationale for implementing such strict rules. Nermin who is a third year student in the mechanical engineering department highlights the necessity of the rules for the places where the projects take place:

“Some places are really conservative, it is in fact right to dress in a close fashion from the very beginning [...] The main aim of setting up the rule is, how can I say, [to make sure that] the people shall not comment [on clothes], not say that [we] are stylish, not to leer at us and so-and-so, [...] because people make evaluations on other terms. ‘When we send our daughter to university, she will be like this; chewing a gum, crossing her legs, etcetera. God knows, this one might be smoking too. Such an impression might be given, such things may have happened and maybe that’s why these [rules] are set.’⁴⁴

For her, they should first protect themselves from the “conservative” eyes and secondly they should break people’s prejudices on university students, particularly on female students. Since many parents would not send their daughters to another place for education because of such a perception on young women who live away from their parents to study, volunteers should change people’s ideas on female students of higher education. Harun who is at his first year in university agrees with Nermin, but he adds that they, the people in rural areas, perceive those in the cities to be *bozulmuş* (spoiled, degenerated), because this is how students are represented in the media and through soap operas. However, if children and their parents see that they don’t have beard and long hair, they will perceive them as not degenerated and as *içlerinden biri* (one of themselves) and thus let their children go to university.

⁴⁴ “Bazı yerler gerçekten konservatif oluyor, ilk baştan şey yapmak doğru aslında en kapalı kıyafeti giymek.[...] Kuralın esas konulma amacı, nasıl diyeyim, laf söylemesinler bunlar süslü püslüymüş denmesin, yan gözle kimse bakmasın laf atmasın falan. [...] Çünkü insanlar farklı değerlendiriyor. Biz üniversiteye kızımızı gönderdiğimiz zaman böyle olacak. Rahat, ağzında sakız, bacak bacak üstüne atmış bilmem ne. Bu Allah bilir sigara da içiyordur. Böyle bir izlenim yaratılıyor olabilir bu yaşanmış olabilir, bu yüzden konmuş olabilir.”

Another volunteer, Aliye who is a student in the department of mathematics education adds another aim to the ones mentioned:

“We try to give the children this idea, we, just like you we also passed these roads, I mean we’ve been to schools and now we are university students. If we dress in fancy clothes they will think that we have good conditions and that’s how we’ve been to schools but the conditions we [the children] have is obvious from our clothing, etcetera; thus we wear normal clothes and show nothing about our own conditions, they don’t understand whether we’re rich or poor, I think the children perceive us like themselves”⁴⁵

According to her, their apparel may highlight the differences between the volunteers and the children. That difference is their urban and middle-class identity, which might be revealed through the symbols they have such as their clothes. For volunteers, children may be motivated to get education if the volunteers manage to be *örnek* (models) and dissolve the difference between themselves and children.

In addition to the attention paid to apparels, volunteers must not eat or drink anything different from the children in schools, even when the school staff offers them food especially prepared for the volunteers. In such cases, the head refuses the offer politely and tells that they want to eat with the children in the refectories sitting with the children. This is another strategy for the volunteers to have the children perceive them as equals.

3.2.2 Strategies for Keeping away from “the political”

To be perceived as “political” is an issue that all volunteers are most cautious about. They are expected not to discuss anything with the teachers and locals. They have many strategies for being “non political”. Behaving, talking, and wearing nothing

⁴⁵ “Biz çocuklara şeyi aşlamaya çalışıyoruz, biz, bizler de sizin gibi bu yollardan geçtik yani okullardan geçtik ve şu an üniversite okuyoruz. Böyle süslenip püslenip gitsek onlar da anlayacaklar ki sizin durumunuz iyi ki gittiniz, ama bizim durumumuz belli kıyafetlerimizden filan diye düşünebilirler yani normal giyinerek durumumuz hakkında hiç bir şey göstermiyoruz zengin miyiz fakir miyiz anlayamıyorlar, çocuklar kendileri gibi görüyorlar bence”

that might be seen as “political” by other people is a general strategy. Being “non political” usually brings an agreement on keeping away from the issues such as the Kurdish question, and the debates on political Islam and secularism. Every detail is arranged to represent themselves as “non-political” especially about these points. For instance, music and songs are a significant means for interacting with children. Before and after the presentation of the head in the morning and in the evening, volunteers ask or pick some children to sing a song to the crowded audience while waiting for the hall to be ready for the presentation. Sometimes they do this just for fun. Although it seems to be a joyful way of interaction for both sides, volunteers are actually alert to the songs sang by the children. While Reha, who was the coordinator of some projects and a fourth year student at the faculty of engineering, was explaining the rules to me before my first experience, he suddenly warned me about an issue that they often came across:

“When we want children to sing, we are careful that they don’t sing in Kurdish, because there can be both Kurdish nationalists and Turkish nationalists around. We are not from any of them; we are not interested in politics.”⁴⁶

Before children started to sing, volunteers ask them to whisper the name of the song. After it is approved by the volunteer, they start singing. If not, volunteers ask children politely to sing another song. In the *YIBOs* in Kurdish populated regions of Turkey, many children sing Kurdish hip hop, pop and folk songs and volunteers are sometimes unable to prevent such situations. On the other hand some volunteers do not prefer to ask them to change their songs. Moreover, song choices sometimes create tensions among volunteers. Last 30 minutes of all projects are reserved to dancing with children, accompanied with a music list mostly composed of two Turkish popular songs of 1970s and folk songs from various regions of Turkey. The list is standard and played in all schools. Nevertheless, there could be some objections about the list. When we were in a school in a province in the South East

⁴⁶ “Çocuklara şarkı söyletirken Kürtçe söylememelerine dikkat ediyoruz, çünkü etrafta Kürt Milliyetçileri de Türk milliyetçileri de olabilir. Biz ikisinden de değiliz, politikayla ilgilenmiyoruz”

of Turkey, Meliha who was a first year student in mechanical engineering department criticized Reha, the coordinator, about the choices in the music list:⁴⁷

-Why didn't you play any songs from the region yesterday, why didn't you play *şemame* (a popular Kurdish folk song)? Other music was played all the time, but the children wanted *şemame*.

-Kurdish is forbidden in schools.

-No, it isn't forbidden.

-Then go and tell it to [Nihat] *hoca*.

Reha avoided any discussion with Meliha and left the room, but did not add the Kurdish song to the list. Meliha also did not attempt to talk with the head and the issue was never discussed again throughout the fifteen days that the project lasted. Despite the given position, volunteers also know the fact that too much emphasis on Turkish may be perceived as being politically positioned in the places where all the children speak in Kurdish at all times except the lectures. Many volunteers were eager to learn a few Kurdish words, songs, and dances from the children. In order to communicate with children who do not know Turkish, they use a document of basic Kurdish sentences and numbers which is sent from their mail list.

Other than the Kurdish songs, many children propose singing chants and other religious songs. With these cases the volunteers use the same strategy of asking the children beforehand. Nevertheless some volunteers joining the projects for the first or second time may not be so careful, ignoring or just forgetting to use the strategy the way it was planned. For instance in a boarding school in a province in Central Anatolia, Ayda who has been volunteering for two years ignored asking the songs that children wanted to sing. After a few songs, a boy got on to the stage and started to sing a chant. She did not interrupt him but asked the next child to first whisper the name of the song he wanted to sing. However their conversation lasted

⁴⁷ -Dün neden hiç yörenin müziklerinden çalmadınız, *şemame* çalmadınız. Hep başka müzikler çaldı, çocuklar *şemame* istiyorlardı" dedi.

-Kürtçe okullarda yasak.

-Hayır yasak değil.

-O zaman git bunu [Nihat] hocaya anlat.

approximately thirty seconds more than the usual. Meanwhile Peker who was volunteering for second time was standing near me and in a low voice he said:

“Look, it is immediately censored. What’s wrong with that? Let the child sing the chant. While I was in Şırnak [for a project] a child had sung a chant too, and then when we were alone I asked him to sing the chant again, he sang it so beautifully that I cried.”⁴⁸

He was talking about a boy who sang a chant during the previous project he joined in another school in the same province. As the case illustrates, some volunteers do not think that these strategies are obligatory for being “non-political”. Such rules were perceived as censorship by some, which contradicts the common insight of the volunteers on what ‘the political’ is.

Volunteers visit many schools in different parts of Turkey. They meet with lots of children, teachers and local people. Through these projects, they meet socially, culturally and politically different milieus that they have not experienced before. Although they spent just a day in each school, Aliye thinks that listening to children for a while is enough for her to realize and understand many details about the people, the teachers, the administration of school, the parents and the village:

“When you speak with adults you can’t know much [about them] because they are pretending. The kids are rather different. You may see the things of the country from children. I went to Kayseri, the first project of mine was Kayseri. It was God, religion, fear, heaven and hell all along... in Kahramanmaraş they talk about Atatürk. Different topics everywhere, I can thus get what people there speak about.”⁴⁹

For her, children are not isolated from politics; they are living within a political atmosphere. To communicate with children can be more challenging than the others.

⁴⁸ “Bak hemen sansür geldi. Ne var bunda? Bırak söylesin çocuklar ilahi. Şırnak’dayken bir çocuk ilahi söylemişti, sonra bir daha söylettim ona tek başımayken, o kadar güzel söyledi ki ağladım.”

⁴⁹ “Büyüklerle konuşunca fazla tanıyamazsın çünkü rol yaparlar. Çocuklar daha farklıdır. Çocuklardan aslında ülkenin şeyini görebilirsin belki. ben Kayseri’ye gittim ilk projem Kayseri idi, Allah’tır dindir, hep böyle korku cehennem cennet... Kahramanmaraş’da Atatürk’ten bahsediyorlar. Her yörede başka şeylerden, çıkarabiliyorum hani birinin [insanların] nelerden konuştuğunu.”

The adults, including teachers, local people and volunteers may use many strategies for the negotiation and toleration of various situations. However children may not consider it necessary. For instance, a volunteer told me about a challenging situation that he encountered:

“[I asked] a child ‘what do you do, how many siblings have you got?’. He said ‘we are nine siblings’. I asked him whether he counted the girls as well; he said ‘No, with them it’s eighteen’. For example they don’t count the girls. [I said] ‘tell me about your siblings, do you have an elderly brother, what does he do?’ and so-and-so. He said ‘he is shooting people like you; he is in the mountains’ [i.e. he is a member of PKK].”⁵⁰

The volunteer who had to face with this situation is Yavuz who is post-graduate student in physics education. What he thinks about the case is that “They are abusing children. [...] everyone becomes “them” except themselves”⁵¹ He adds that such kinds of reactions, particularly concerning the Kurdish question, become more and more frequent in every project. Nevertheless, he thinks he should respond in accordance with the rules and the practices of the organization. In other words he should be “non-political,” but not through disregarding the situation. On the contrary, he should respond in a way that would convict the child to take him as a model.

“My answer was, I said ‘why do you think so, am I a bad person’. I said ‘I liked you very much, didn’t you like me’. He said ‘no, I like you very much, too’. I said ‘then, why does your brother want to kill me’. I asked ‘are we all the same, what is the reason of this, why all this grudge, hate, aren’t we siblings, isn’t it our country, don’t we all live in this land, what is the reason of this fight, why is he doing this’. I said ‘perhaps you also want to be in the mountains. One day, will you be able to shoot me while I go to schools by bus to make projects with your siblings like you?’ At that moment he stopped, he started to think. He said ‘okay, you’re a very good person, I

⁵⁰ “Çocuklardan biri çıktı [...] ne yapıyorsunuz abicim kaç kardeşsiniz [diye sordum] 9 kardeşiz diyor. Kızları saydın mı diyorum, yok onlarla 18 diyor. Mesela kızları da saymıyorlar ya. Eee say bakayım kardeşlerini abin var mı ne yapıyorlar filan [diyorum]. Bana, sizin gibileri vuruyor, dağda, diyor.”

⁵¹ “Çocukları kullanıyorlar. [...] Kendileri dışındaki herkes “onlar” oluyor.”

liked you very much'. As we left he was one of the children who cried the most.⁵²

The child perceives the volunteers as “the other” and even as “the enemy”. The volunteer tried not to argue about any issue, reoriented his focus not to the conflict but to another ground such as love, sisterhood/brotherhood of the Turks and the Kurds in the country. It is assumed that these points are common grounds and seen as within the boundaries of “non-political”. According to his narration, Yavuz managed to be a model since the child changed his mind, at least for that moment. These practices and strategies for challenges and are not only the rules they have to obey for volunteering in the organization, they also influence both how volunteers make sense of world, and how they make sense of their experiences, the children, teachers, villages, schools, politics, state etc.

⁵² “Cevabım şu oldu niye öyle düşünüyorsun ben kötü birisi miyim, dedim. Ben seni çok sevdim sen beni hiç sevmedin mi, dedim. Yooo ben de seni çok seviyorum dedi. Niye o zaman ağabeyin beni öldürmek istiyor, dedim. Hepimiz aynı mıyız niye böyle bir şey niye bu kin dedim biz kardeş değimliyiz bu ülke bizim değil mi bu topraklarda hepimiz yaşamıyor muyuz bu kavga niye dedim, neden böyle bir şey yapıyor. Dedim hem belki sen de dağa çıkmak istiyorsundur. Bir gün dedim otobüsle sizin gibi kardeşlerinize projeye giderken çıkıp beni vurabilecek misin dedim. O zaman durdu düşünmeye başladı. Tamam dedi sen çok iyisin ben seni çok sevdim, dedi. Giderken de en fazla ağlayan çocuklardan da biri olmuş bizden ayrılırken.”

CHAPTER IV

BEING “POLITICAL” or BEING “VOLUNTEER”?: CONCEPTUALIZATIONS of PROBLEMS and PERSPECTIVES on SOLUTIONS

One of the most important parts of the projects is the three speeches given by the head. The first and the third speech are for all the children in the schools, whereas the second one addresses the teachers and administrative staff. A day starts at 7 am for volunteers, if they arrive in the school the night before the project. In fifteen or twenty minutes' time, all volunteers must get up from their beds in the dormitories of the school and be ready in the queue to have breakfast with the children. After eating and chatting with the children in the refectories, a volunteer calls from the megaphone for the morning sport, until the time for the speech of the head of the organization. Then some volunteers line the children up to enter the hall where the event is to start. The head firstly introduces himself as an academician and the head of FARPS, coming there from the University of U. He talks briefly about the organization and their aim, with many visual materials. He projects a moving picture of the world, then Turkey, and then the city where the campus of the University of U is located, and lastly, the campus itself through a simulation taken from Google Earth. After a while, there appears a very old black-and-white photo of a “village child” on the curtain. Nihat starts to tell the life story of the boy, which is a real one. The boy was an orphan and an illiterate shepherd in a village of Turkey; but he achieved to be a physics professor globally known and have a theorem called by his name. After that Nihat asks to the crowd of children why they would not be like him. Next story is about a woman who is now a professor in a department of marine sciences, although she was not permitted by her father to continue with her education. Then he goes on telling other stories such as the story of an imprisoned

young woman who managed to succeed the university entrance exam and the story of a boy who became a chess champion by working hard. Supported by many visual and audio materials, his presentation which is silently listened to by nearly all the children in all schools, is absorbing, although it is very didactic. It lasts fifty minutes and mentions many stories and advices, but the common point is the individual attempts of the heroes or heroines in order to overcome the difficulties they have to face in their lives. They should desire, study hard and achieve their goal, although there are many obstacles they have to confront. A sentence he says to the children in all presentations summarizes why they should try harder than their peers according to Nihat:⁵³ “To live better than your families, and to be beneficial to our country, you should study hard.”

In Nihat’s next presentation, the audience is only the teachers, because volunteers are in the classes doing their activities with children. Like the previous one, this speech is also supported with various materials. However, these are quite different from those in the other presentations. He projects to a curtain the letters of teachers and children which were sent to the organization and the volunteer *ağabey*s and *ablas*; photos of children, teachers and schools, taken during projects and recordings. Every point he mentions has a visual or audio reference. This time the stories are mostly on devoted or indifferent teachers. One example is about the teachers who have the girls’ hair cut like boys because of an infestation of lice, rather than disinfecting the school. Another one is about a boarding school building covered with prison bars because the building had actually been a prison before and not adequately converted to a school. Some other examples are on the girls who were forced to marry and thus could not continue to their education, and on girls who were not allowed by their fathers to go to school because their fathers believe this is wrong according to religion. He goes on and talks about the responsibilities that children have to take despite their small age, such as taking care of themselves and their younger siblings. There are also some stories about “idealist” teachers. Many of the heroes and heroines devote themselves to the children and for the improvement of their conditions in the schools. One such example is that of a teacher who could not leave his students and the village he works because he

⁵³ “Ailelerinizden daha iyi yaşamak için, ülkemize faydalı olmak için çalışmalısınız.”

thought this would affect the children's performance in school, although his wife left him because of the poor conditions of the village in which she did not want to live anymore. The point he emphasizes the most is that the lives of the children in villages and particularly in *YİBOs* are very different and difficult than many other children. However for him "idealist" and devoted teachers have a capacity to change the lives of these children through education. Moreover, if the children are motivated, they will be able to live differently from their parents who live in villages in poor conditions. According to him, the teachers are capable to motivate and encourage them to continue to high school and then to the university, because *YİBOs* are not only schools but the places where children spent most of their times, away from the village setting. He claims that the only way to "break the chain" (*zinciri kırmak*) is education. What he wants to break is the continuity between the lives of children and their families, because the families live in poverty in villages, they are uneducated, and their priorities about their children may be quite different from science and education. He goes on with his idea that transforming the society and individuals can be done through producing scientific and technological knowledge. That is why education and teachers' efforts for motivating these children is very crucial for "breaking the chains."

At the end of a project day, I was in the room of the school's assistant manager with many volunteers. In the activity room everyone was tired, waiting for the activities to finish. Ahmet *Hoca* was also among the ones who were waiting. He asked me:⁵⁴ "We aim to find out either the villagers [in villages] or the villagers in the cities and towns, why?" He immediately answered his question without waiting for my response.⁵⁵ "As children have never seen university graduates or seen so little, they lack stimulation. Actually, these projects are only motivation projects." In line with the ideas of the head, he thinks that the whole environment of these children is not capable of encouraging them to get education and to live a "better" life. The people who are educated and engaged in science can fulfill this lack of motivation.

⁵⁴ "Biz, ya köylüye ya da şehir ve kasabadaki köylüleri bulmaya gidiyoruz, neden?"

⁵⁵ "Çünkü bu çocuklar üniversite mezunu ya çok, az ya da hiç görmemişlerdi. Uyarıcıları eksik. Bu projeler aslında yalnızca bir motivasyon projesi."

The grounds on which volunteerism, “political” and “non political” are constructed by the group stand on how they define “the problem” about their target group and develop solutions for them, and practice it through volunteer act. That is why the question Ahmet *Hoca* asked and answered is crucial in order to understand their practice and perceptions. Why and what these people are volunteering for and their conceptualization of the problems the children face are based on their experience in schools and their interaction with the children. It is significant to note that these perceptions and ideas are not homogeneous, but diversified.

4.1 Definition of the Problem

Volunteers’ thoughts, analyses, solutions and strategies concerning the children are constituted through their perceptions of children and their conditions. While constructing their views; their point of departure is comparing their lives and experiences with those of the children’s. In other words, they construct and reconstruct their selves and their identities when they interact with the others. As a result, interaction between groups contributes to the forming of the boundaries between them in being defined through and different from each other (Barth, 1969: 11-15). This point does not indicate the fashionable rhetoric of “we” and the “other” that makes any analysis blurred. (1994: 13). Social boundaries and identity constructions are based on the others who are near or familiar, instead of a stranger or an unfamiliar “other”. That is why interaction with the familiar “other” does not lead to a hegemonic and unilateral view of “the other”, but, more often, it leads to question of how “we” are distinct from “them” (ibid). In this context, volunteers’ strategy for defining their motives, children’s problems and their solution is to ask how they are different from them. On the one hand the question constructs their perceptions, feelings, ideas on children’s problems and the ways to solve. On the other hand it gives an answer as the construction of a distinct identity.

4.1.1 Pure but Unlucky

Volunteers think that the village children, particularly the ones who are students in boarding schools are very special, since they are different from the children grown up in urban places and even different from the volunteers themselves. In the bus I was sitting next to Ilgaz who has been volunteering for 3 years, as we were going to places that both of us have seen before, she explained the difference between her and the people and children she will meet:

“There should not be any Starbucks in Diyarbakır because these have already polluted our culture, we have already been into this [degenerated culture], at least they should not get into this, they have a culture that hasn’t degenerated yet.”⁵⁶

Volunteers’ identification of themselves is like a “mirrored reversal of other” (Bauman, 2004: 20). They are orientalizing the people in the villages not through simple conceptualizations of “we are good and they are bad”, but through self-critique and exoticization of the other (ibid: 20-21) by saying they are “pure” and “not spoiled/degenerated” or by romanticizing the village.⁵⁷

In addition to a “romantic” perception of village life, volunteers also emphasize the village children who live in boarding schools as a more special category in comparison to most of those who live in urban and industrial cities. Harun who is at his first year in the university and in the organization explains his impressions on children he met during the volunteer projects as such:

“Those children are subject to that education, their families brought them up in that way, they have a sense of embarrassment, they do not have any problem of being spoiled, degeneration hasn’t touched them yet. I mean they have limited access to technical possibilities in the YİBOs, they see

⁵⁶ “Starbucks Diyarbakırda olmamalı çünkü bizim kültürümüzü kirlenmişler biz zaten girmişiz [bu yoz kültüre], bari onlar girmesin, daha yozlaşmamış kültürleri var”

⁵⁷ Historically Romantic perception of village life has roots in the peasantist and populist discourse in the early republican period in Turkey. This discourse is a sum of the ideas that emphasize the importance of rural life and rural values in a time when urbanization and industrialization was a dominant discourse in the world. (Karaömerlioğlu, 2006: 14).

television so rarely, they see computers so rarely, there are books and they study; more pure and clean they are still children and they are in the pure stage of childhood.”⁵⁸

In their ethnographic study on French teachers’ image of rural and working class, Reed-Danahay and Anderson-Levitt (1991: 555) observe a similar understanding by the teachers in France who define the children in rural France as “calmer” and those in the urban as “agitated”. In addition to such an emphasis, Harun adds another “romantic” and also “exotic” idea, the isolation from technology of the children in villages, particularly those in boarding schools. Since they have limited access to use and even know technology compared to the children in the urban settings, the village children remain “pure”. Despite the assumption of isolation from technology, the volunteers pay a special attention not to talk about the issues in “popular culture” such as facebook, soccer teams or soap operas, and they even warn the children not to listen İsmail YK⁵⁹ who is very popular, I can say, in regional boarding schools. They think that these are the things that spoil the children in the cities. In contradistinction from their urban peers, this kind of popular stuff should not distract the village children from studying hard, in order to be socially mobilized or in volunteers’ terms in order to have better life conditions. Popular culture is perceived as a barrier against this aim. That is why volunteer *ablas* and *ağabeys*, who are hard-working, successful and thinking scientifically, should not talk about any issue from the field of popular culture, even if they are interested in these things as well.

Despite their purity and many other qualifications these children have in comparison to the others, their lives are very different from those of the volunteers. According to Nermin these children are unlucky and this is very unjust:

“When I returned in September, these children eat rice there, eat only two meals, look what you’re eating here. Who do you think you are that you have the luxury to buy and eat what you want, how come you have this

⁵⁸ “Bu çocuklar işte bu eğitimi bulmuşlar aileleri öyle yetiştirmiş, utanma duyguları var, yozlaşma sorunları yok, daha yozlaşma onlara dokunamamış. Çocuklar YİBO’larda teknik imkanlara, yani televizyon çok az görüyor, bilgisayarı çok az görüyorlar, kitaplar var ve ders çalışıyorlar daha saf ve temiz daha çocuk ve çocuğun saf haline sahipler.”

⁵⁹ A popular arabesque and pop music singer.

[possibility]? The world is a completely unjust place. This is completely related with where you were born, your luck and your family and I don't know how we can prevent this or whether we can possibly prevent it, because it is extremely difficult to render the 'unjust' 'just'.”⁶⁰

Since these children are born in villages and have worse conditions than her, Nermin thinks that they are not as lucky as her. The experience she had in doing volunteer activity led her to feel guilty through making a comparison. Although being born in village is a source of injustice, it causes children to be pure, unlike their urban peers:

“The children in villages are very pure, we pollute the ones in cities, for the sake of our own selfishness and ambitions we pollute them. Roughly comparing, if it takes 2 months to save an urban kid, saving a village kid takes 4 or 5 hours.”⁶¹

Since the village children are pure and not spoiled, it is easier for volunteers to save them. In line with this argument, the urban way of living, consumption habits, individualism, ambitions and desires are thought to ruin the culture of people in the urban. However, the people living in villages or rural areas are not spoiled yet. Their culture is like the old times when the people in the cities had not changed or spoiled themselves. Such a perception about the rural life and especially about students from the rural areas is also discussed in the study of Reed-Danahay and Anderson-Levitt (ibid). They claim that French teachers romanticize the rural life but idealize the bourgeois family model which is identified with conflicting themes in French culture and politics. Basing on the images, they aim to address the relationship between the “dominant” ideology of the family and the process of social stratification (ibid: 547). There are similarities between French teachers and the

⁶⁰ “Eylülde döndüğüm zaman, bu çocuklar orada pilav yiyor, sadece iki öğün yiyor, sen burada gelmiş neler yiyorsun. Sen onlardan, sen nesin ki bunu alma lüksüne sahipsin istediğini yiyebiliyorsun yani bu şeye sahipsin. Dünya tamamen adaletsiz bir yer. Bu tamamen nerede doğduğumuzla, şansınla, ailenle ilgili bir şey ve bunun önüne nasıl geçebiliriz bilmiyorum veya geçebilir miyiz onu da bilmiyorum, çünkü çok aşırı derecede zor bir şey bu adaletsizliği adil hale getirmek.”

⁶¹ “Köy çocukları çok temiz, şehirdekileri kirletiyoruz, kendi bencilliklerimiz ve hırslarımız uğruna onları kirletiyoruz. Kaba bir benzetme ile bir şehir çocuğunu kurtarmak 2 ay sürüyorsa köy çocuğu 4-5 saat sürüyor.”

FARPS volunteers regarding the romanticization of village. Volunteers see children in an unlucky position, while they define their setting as idealized and romanticized.

In line with these ideas, volunteers also find those children respectful, good, and well-behaved, not naughty like their peers in the cities. However there are some counter views or perceptions within the group. For instance there are ones who do not think that “not being naughty” is always good. During a project, in a boarding school in Çorum, a few volunteers were waiting for their next activity hour in the activity room. Two volunteers started to talk about their impressions on the school. One of them was telling the other that she found the school very clean and the food is good and delicious. Other volunteer responded her friend mentioning how the children were respectful and quiet during the activities she carried out. Tayfun, another volunteer in the activity room interrupted their talk by saying confidently that: “It is not that much good to be silent and well behaved, it also indicates that the discipline exercised is too much.”⁶² Tayfun used to be a student in a regional boarding school, and first met FARPS during his boarding school years. He continued to high school and then university with the support of the organization and is now volunteering in the same organization for the children he once was like. While other volunteers idealize and naturalize the children, he thinks that the picture others see might be a result of oppression at the school or at home.

4.1.2 Staying at Home or Going to the Boarding School?

Boarding schools have many impacts on children and their families according to volunteers. As a schooling system, advantages and disadvantages of these schools is a hot issue debated many times.

Volunteers think that the children in boarding schools need much more affection and attraction because they are away from their parents. In order to fulfill this need and keep people’s, teachers’ or volunteers’ attention, they even pretend to be sick:

⁶² “Sessiz, uslu olmak her zaman o kadar iyi değildir, bu çok fazla disiplin olduğunu da gösterir.”

“Something specific to boarder children is, a child becomes ill just to draw people’s attention, not because she/he is really ill. For example, if you go to lots of boarding schools, you can more easily see that the child expects further attention from you.”⁶³

In the quote above, Asiye states that lack of attention is a general characteristic of the children in boarding schools. Many children expect the volunteers to show them more attention. Although they only spend one day with the volunteers, they feel very sad and some even cry while volunteers leave their schools.

Another point that one must highlight about the volunteers’ perception of children is the volunteers’ astonishment when they see the burden and responsibilities these children have to take in their daily lives, despite their young ages⁶⁴. First of all, there is no staff in these schools employed for the daily care of the children, not even for the youngest ones. Since it is a compulsory education, it is possible to see more than one child from a family or children who are cousin or relatives at the same school. In addition to the responsibility of taking care of themselves in terms of cleanliness, tidiness, nutrition etc; many children, especially the girls, have to take care of their younger siblings, cousins or relatives during the time they stay in the dormitories. While talking about the impressions on children, schools, volunteerism and the projects, which is a usual practice of the group on the way back from a project,

⁶³ “Yatılı çocukların özel şeyleri de orada hasta olan çocuk sadece ilgi görmek için hasta oluyor, gerçekten hasta olduğu için değil. Mesela çok yatılı okula gidersen o çocuğun sende ekstra ilgi istediğini daha çabuk kavrayabiliyorsun.”

⁶⁴ Children in Turkey start the first year of the 8-year compulsory education at the age of 7. However, not all regional boarding schools have students at this age. There is not a standard minimum age for the village children in the regional boarding schools.

First five grades of compulsory formal education is named *birinci kademe* [first degree] and the remaining three grades is called *ikinci kademe* [second degree]. Some regional boarding schools have students from both degrees, some only has the second degree and some has students either in 3rd or 4th or 5th grade. This is determined in accordance with the needs of the region and the capacities of both the schools in the villages and the regional boarding schools. The ages of the students in the second degree is from 12 to 14 under normal conditions. However one can usually see students older than 14 in the second degree of regional boarding schools, as it is very common for children to have one or two year breaks in their education because of their unpaid labor.

many volunteers, particularly the ones who volunteer for the first time, usually talk about the difficulties the children have to face and compare their own childhoods with the ones they had just seen. In such a time of sharing impressions with other volunteers, Nil who had not participated in such volunteer projects before, started to talk about a girl who looks after her younger sister in the school: “Songül embraces her sister/brother like a mother [...] I understood how early these children are growing up.”⁶⁵.

Despite such evaluations, the general tendency among volunteers is on the contrary. The head and many volunteers think that boarding schools are much more advantageous for the children because if children continue their education through *taşımali eğitim*⁶⁶ (mobile education), staying in their villages, the workload at home would be greater than the responsibilities they have to take at the boarding schools. Moreover, the facilities in terms of educational staff and equipment in *YİBO*s are more sufficient than those in the village schools. During a project in a district of Çorum, an assistant manager of a school who was at his thirties started to talk with volunteers in his room which was lent to the volunteers as activity room: “*YİBO*s should be abolished, because the children can’t manage to look after themselves, mobile education should be started”⁶⁷ Reha, a student in an engineering department responded that “but if the children stay at home, they can never be saved from the village.”⁶⁸. The assistant manager went on saying that:

“That’s in the theory. Even the minister came and said ‘I wouldn’t send my children to *YİBO*. *YİBO*s should be abolished; let the children stay with their families. Not everyone have to get education [high school and university education]; what is important is to acquire an occupation. If she/he wants to

⁶⁵ “Songül anne gibi sahiplenmiş kardeşini. [...] Bu çocukların ne kadar erken büyüdüklerini anladım.”

⁶⁶ *Taşımali eğitim* is transporting children from their villages to the schools by vehicles everyday. The expense of transportation is met by the state.

⁶⁷ “*YİBO*lar kalkmalı, kaldırılmalı çünkü bu çocuklar kendi kendilerine idare edemiyorlar, taşımali eğitime geçilmeli”

⁶⁸ “Ama çocuklar evde kalırlarsa, köyden hiçbir zaman kurtulamazlar.”

have education, she/he should have it but there is no such thing as everyone must get education.’⁶⁹

Volunteers perceive the boarding schools as means for the children’s social mobilization and getting out of the village settings. Even though new burdens are also produced and reproduced in these schools, according to the volunteers it is better for the children to be distant from the workload in the village. Since in this way they do not spend all their time in the village, they will have the possibility of having different “choices” from those in the villages. The stress of rural people’s education is not a new debate in Turkey. The former idea in the early republican period was based on transforming the population and changing the cultural material life in accordance with the needs of the nation state through reforming the village life (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998: 72). However, the latter paradigm also focuses on the individuals and on “rescuing” the children from the village environment.

There are also some counter arguments about the parents of these children and on the role of the YİBOs, and there is diversity within the group regarding how they conceptualize such problems based on their own experiences. While returning from Muş (a province in Eastern Anatolia) Asiye stated that she can understand some parents that do not let their daughters to continue their education: “I cannot even imagine how they afford to live with so many children”⁷⁰. The reason why they do not send their children to school or do not let them go on after compulsory education is poverty, according to her. She thinks that if parents can afford the education of one of their children, the other ones who would be “sacrificed” will be the daughters because the parents think that they will marry while their sons have to be the breadwinners.

Rıdvan is another volunteer with many questions in his mind concerning the families, the children, the boarding schools, and even on the 8-years compulsory education. The ideas of another volunteer who used to be a student in a regional boarding

⁶⁹ “Teoride öyle. Bakan dahi geldi çocuğumu YİBOya vermem dedi. Yibolar kalkmalı, çocuklar ailelerinin yanında olsun. Herkes eğitim [lise ve üniversite eğitimi] görmek zorunda değil, meslek edindirmek önemli. İstiyorsa okusun ama herkes okuyacak diye bir şey yok”

⁷⁰ “O kadar çocukla nasıl geçindiklerini bile düşünemiyorum.”

school influenced him and made him think about the 8-years compulsory education and the boarding schools. Rıdvan said that although Taner left his village thanks to *YİBO*s and does not want to return there anymore, he thought that children are forced to be taken from their families to the boarding schools because of 8-years compulsory education:

“When you think about it, in fact it’s very bad. You take the child away from her/his family and oblige her/him to get education in a boarding school, you take her/him from her/his home. It is so miserable that this is a better alternative than the other. [It is expected to be better] for them to stay in the village, to be better, to give better results; so you, as the state, could not provide this opportunity in the village, that’s what it means.”⁷¹

This is a highly controversial topic, according to Rıdvan. On the one hand he thinks Taner is right that boarding school children are neither able to be successful, nor can they share the burden of their families or contribute to the family budget. For him, as long as better standards are not provided for these people, 8-years of compulsory education is like torturing both the children and their parents. On the other hand, he thinks that these schools are a great chance and opportunity for these children to get education and have a better life.

4.1.3 Motivation and Success

Volunteers’ own life stories and experiences are significant reference points in explaining what the children lack, what they need and what their problems are, and as I stated before, this is also a means for them to construct their selves. I met Hasan in the bus while going to a school in *Çorum*. He is a senior student in the top engineering department of Turkey in terms of the score one has to make in the university entrance exam. He used to be a student for a few years in a *YİBO* in South

⁷¹ “Düşündüğün zaman aslında çok kötü. Çocuğu ailesinin yanından alıyorsun ve yatılı okumak zorunda bırakıyorsun, evinden alıyorsun. Bunun öbüründen daha iyi bir alternatif olması çok acı. Köyde kalıyor olması daha iyi olması daha iyi sonuçlar doğuruyor olması [beklenir] yani sen devlet olarak köyde bu imkanı sağlayamamışsın demek ki.”

Eastern Anatolia, but not as a boarder whose family lived in a village. Hasan’s father was a teacher in that school and they were living in the quarters located in the school area. He had many memories from those years that also contributed in his becoming a volunteer for the children in these schools. We talked about his best friend in his boarding school years. He is now in touch with him thanks to Facebook. According to Hasan, his friend was very talented and smarter than him, and graduated as the top student of their school. Hasan explained that while he is a student in a department that is in the first rank in the score it requires in the entrance exams, his friend has graduated from a department ranked in the middle. He questioned the difference in their life trajectories: “What is this difference? Because I have a family who motivated me, I was constantly motivated. But he didn’t have motivation.”⁷² For Hasan the reason why his friend hasn’t been as successful as himself is the lack of motivation. Families of the students in these schools are unable to motivate their children, just like the family of his friend. That is why motivation is a need that the volunteers emphasize so much. On the other hand Asiye stresses that economic restrains are influential in children’s school success and families’ preferences. Yet, to be motivated is much more a basic need for these children:

“Their conditions are worse in terms of finance as well but I think [FARPS] is not a foundation that focuses on financial issues. Because they have much more primary needs. For example if a child in Istanbul [in similar conditions] is very successful, it will be easier for him/her to be noticed and to be sent to a *dersane* (supplementary private schools for exams). But the children there [in YİBOs] have significant potentials, too. Those potentials should be explored. That’s why [FARPS] has to find them out. Maybe the child cannot learn to be self-sufficient because his/her parents and teachers don’t know that too. I mean they may not be able to motivate themselves. That’s why they need someone else to do this. I think that [FARPS] fills this gap”⁷³

⁷² “Nedir bu fark? Çünkü beni motive eden bir ailem vardı, sürekli bir motivasyonum vardı. Onun ise motivasyonu yoktu”

⁷³ “Maddi olarak da koşulları daha düşük ama, [FARPS] maddiyat üzerinde duran bir vakıf değil bence. Onların çok daha büyük ihtiyaçları olduğu için. Mesela İstanbul’da [benzer durumdaki] bir çocuk çok başarılı olursa, onun fark edilmesi dershaneye gitmesi falan daha kolay. Ama oradaki çocukların da içinde çok büyük potansiyeller var. Oradaki potansiyelleri keşfetmek lazım. İşte

For her, there is nobody or no opportunity to notice and appreciate village child, because these children or the people around them are unable to motivate them to be successful. While their families or teachers are also unable to motivate themselves, how they can teach them to be motivated? Rıdvan thinks in line with Asiye, but adds something more concerning the children's and their families' life. While talking about a small girl he met in a school who was one of the children he could never forget, he told me that he could predict her future:

“You more or less make out the life the child has to live. Either she won't be able to continue her education. Even if she continues [to high school], that child, that child who is very special will go unnoticed among the ordinary, not ordinary, but among the people who are like everyone else in the village. Probably it will be like this. You know the truth, this is such a painful situation [...] Everyone is very special and different in themselves, but she won't be able to experience this feeling or show herself, or she won't even be aware of that. It is quite possible that she won't realize that she is special, she is different and she is an individual. [...] because there in the village people have no perception of being different, no concern of being an individual, the concern in the village is to live and die.”⁷⁴

That girl, according to Rıdvan, will not be able to realize that she is an “individual” who is different and independent from other individuals unless she leaves the village to receive university education. Ree-Danahay (2006: 131-152) explores a similar idea in French rural narratives of biographies. In those autoethnographies, becoming

[FARPS]'ın gidip bulması gerekiyor. Belki kendi kendine yetmeyi annesi babası öğretmenleri çok bilmediği için çocuk da bunu öğrenemiyor. Yani kendi kendini çok güdüleyemiyor. O yüzden dışarıdan birilerinin bunu yapmasına ihtiyaç duyuyorlar. [Farps] oradaki boşluğu kapatıyor diye düşünüyorum.

⁷⁴ “Çocuğun yaşamak zorunda olduğu hayatı az çok kestiriyorsun. Ya muhtemelen okuyamayacak; [lise] okusa bile köy içinde o çocuk, o çok özel olan çocuk, köy içinde diğer sıradan, sıradan değil de belki herkes gibi olanlar içinde kaynayacak. Büyük ihtimalle böyle olacak. Gerçeği biliyorsun çok acı bir durum. [...] Hakkaten herkes için kendisi özel ve farklı ama bunu yaşayamayacak olan ya da ön plana çıkartamayacak, ya da bunun farkına bile varamayacak, özel olduğunun farklı olduğunun kendince bir birey olduğunun farkına varamadan yaşayabilme ihtimali çok yüksek mesela o çocuğun. [...] Çünkü orada insanın farklı olmak gibi bir algısı yok, birey olmak gibi bir derdi yok. yaşayıp ölelim derdi var köyde.”

educated implies being distant from ones rural origins and having the consciousness of being an “individual” (ibid: 132). The village milieu is perceived by volunteers as a static, homogeneous, timeless environment and the main obstacle for the motivation and social mobilization of the children through education. Families who live in this milieu have a considerable role in this situation, according to the volunteers. Families who do not take care of their children sufficiently are certainly unable to motivate their children for education. Basing on his practices and experience in boarding schools Yavuz thinks that:

“I’ve listened to incredible stories from the children, it’s unbelievable. I mean, a child told me that he stayed in the barn. If this child had seen here [the university campus], I’m sure he would do his best to get education, but he is able to do this only with our support because how can the family members support him, can a family who has the mentality to make their child live in the same place with animals encourage/support their child? I don’t think that education is important for them.”⁷⁵

For Yavuz, the families are the only actors to be blamed for the present situation of these children. Many volunteers perceive themselves as successful individuals due to the motivation acquired from their families. FARPS and volunteers are seeking to compensate the lack of motivation that the children cannot get from their families. For them, motivation is an essential means for success.

Bourdieu (1998: 20) explains success in school through social and structural dynamics. For him, it is the educational system which maintains the pre-existing order and separates and re-separates the holders of cultural capital from the ones who lack it (ibid). Basing on his ethnographic studies in rural France, Bourdieu (cited in Reed-Danahay, 1996: 28-29) clarifies that lower classes (such as the small farmers in rural France) fail to succeed in schooling, because they lack the types of social knowledge and cultural capital or “cultural goods” including the linguistic

⁷⁵ “Çocuklardan muazzam hikayeler dinledim, inanılmaz. Yani çocuk diyor ki ben ahırda kalıyorum. O çocuk burayı [üniversiteyi] görse mesela eminim ki okumak için elinden gelen mücadeleyi verecektir. Ama bizim desteğimizle çünkü aile bunu ne kadar destekleyebilir, böyle bir zihniyetteki aile çocuğuyla hayvanları bir tutup aynı yerde kalmasını sağlayan bir aile, eğitimin onlar için önemli olduğunu zannetmiyorum”

styles, values, interests and tastes valued by the school system. However, how schooling reproduces failure of lower classes is extraneous to what is discussed here. The point here is that the volunteers conceptualize the problem through placing emphasis only on individual attempts and prefer to disregard the other instances such as social, cultural, political and economical ones.

4.2 Perspectives on Solutions

Volunteers think that this experience create changes in their lives and in how they understand Turkey and the society. One of their crucial analyses on this change is that they are introduced to the “facts” of Turkey. According to Yavuz, the organization made him know about some places, districts and provinces that he has never and ever had the possibility to see, such as Tunceli, Artvin, and Ardahan. He adds: “FARPS took me and showed me the facts of Turkey, there is a completely different life in those places.”⁷⁶ The definition of the “facts” of Turkey is various and multifaceted for volunteers. When I asked Nermin whether there has been any change on any thought of her when she compares before and after her first project, what she told me was “For instance I did not believe that people were so poor that they did not have money for food. I really didn’t believe it. I used to think that everyone has money”⁷⁷ Similarly, Elvan who is at her first year in the university mentioned that “In the news we see girls who can’t get education, I didn’t believe it, but I saw that it is real”⁷⁸ Another volunteer, İnan, underlined that he was identifying himself as a nationalist but after he having been to the “East” for fifteen days he started to think that “There is such a poverty here that desperation has penetrated everywhere. People here do not go to mountains [becoming PKK members], they already live in the mountains.”⁷⁹ These words can be interpreted as he started to

⁷⁶ “FARPS götürdü ve Türkiye’nin gerçeğini gösterdi. Oralarda bambaşka bir yaşam var.

⁷⁷ “Ben hiç inanmıyordum insanların fakir olduğuna, yiyecek paralarının olmayacak kadar, inanmıyordum gerçekten inanmıyordum. herkesin mutlaka parası vardır, diye düşünüyordum”

⁷⁸ “Kızların okuyamadığını haberlerden görüyoruz, inanmıyordum, gerçek olduğunu gördüm.”

⁷⁹ “Öyle bir yoksulluk var ki, çaresizlik her yere sinmiş durumda. Buradaki insanlar dağa çıkmıyor, zaten dağda yaşıyor”

understand the people who are pro-Kurdish movements through linking this to extreme poverty, although he used to be against them. Even though these “facts” are highly debated political issues, many people, including the volunteers, normally follow them from the newspapers, TVs, and through other indirect means of communication. They intend to stress that thanks to the volunteer projects, they see, learn, talk, discuss and experience the politics of Turkey firsthand. In other words, despite the dominant discourse on being non-political, volunteers are politicized through these projects because they try to make sense of these debates. Ada who is a volunteer studying at an engineering department abroad interprets volunteerism and the projects as such: “It offers a perspective for making change in the future what is present now. We also create a change now, but we [also] offer a perspective to make bigger changes.”⁸⁰ Their experiences and practices as volunteers are very influential in drawing a framework about reasoning and conceptualizing social issues and offering a solution.

4.2.1 On the Role of University

First of all, the leading figures, academicians in the organization, have a perspective which integrates university to such kinds of volunteer activity. They sometimes represent their organization and networks as a model for other universities. However there were some oppositional ideas within the University of U concerning the relation between university and the whole organization. Some academicians think that the projects which are carried out by the center are not related with the mission of the university. The point of departure is whether a university should support such kinds of activities or not. Regarding the usage of the buses, drivers who are staffs of the university and some other facilities for which the university provided, there emerge some objections against Nihat and Şevval. Nevertheless, they think that the mission of universities and academicians is not only to sit and write articles, but also “*topluma hizmet*” (serving the public). Nihat says that doing projects of revolving funds of universities does not mean serving to society, and

⁸⁰ “Olanı değiştirmek için ilerde, bir bakış açısı sağlıyor. Şu anda da bir değişiklik yaratıyoruz. Ama daha büyük değişiklikler yapmak için bir bakış açısı sağlıyoruz”

writing an article for any American journal does not make him happy and people in the universities should leave their ivory towers. Şevval explains her view on the mission of the university and academicians in a more detailed way through some personal observations:⁸¹

“A paradigm changes in the world. [...] I am coming from Princeton, yesterday. Here, the university’s gates are locked. There, a man who enters through this gate may, pardon me, pee in [the toilettes of] any department in Princeton University. Here wire fences cover all around, there’s no such thing in the west. What happens when you isolate universities from the society? [the society will say] ‘oh the *hocas*? They’re godless, they are *gavur* (infidel), no one knows what they are doing’. Let me tell you that story. I started to make statistics by asking this question firstly to my driver [in the university]. *M. Efendi*, I said, ‘what do you think the duty of *hocas* is?’ He said [she imitates his accent] ‘What could it be, *hocam*, it is to scold us.’ I asked the secretary of A. coordinator. I said ‘*G.*, what do you think a *hoca* of university does?’ She said, ‘*Hocam*, they phone this and that all the time, they shout at me on the phone and then hang up on me.’ [...] Do you know what the boy there [working in the university radio station] said to me? I asked him “what do you think the duty of a *hoca* is?” He said ‘asking hard questions’. This is how the society perceives the university. [...] Well then, how

⁸¹ “Dünyada çok ciddi bir paradigma değişiyor.[...] Ben dün Princeton’dan geliyorum. Burada, üniversitenin kapısı kilitli. Orada bu kapıdan geçen bir adam Princeton üniversitesinin bir bölümüne [tuvaletine] affedersin şeyini yapar. Burada her taraf tel örgülerle çevrili, yok böyle bir şey batıda. Toplumdan üniversiteleri izole ettiğin zaman ne oluyor? Aman hoca kısmı mı, onlar dinsizdir, gavurdur, ne yaparlar bilinmez. Ben o hikayeyi anlatayım sana. Ben ilk istatistiğe bu soruyu sorarak, benim [üniversitedeki] şoförden başladım. *M. efendi* dedim, sence hocaların görevi nedir dedim. “Ne olacak hocam, bizi azarlamaktır” dedi. [şivesini taklit ederek]. *A. koordinatörlüğü* sekreterine sordum. *G.* dedim sence üniversite hocası ne yapar. “*Hocam*”, dedi, ikide bir ona buna açar, telefonla bağırır çağırır suratıma telefonu kapatırlar” dedi. [...] Bana oradaki [üniversitenin radyosunda çalışan] çocuk ne dedi biliyor musun? Sence hocanın görevi nedir, diye sordum, “kazık soru sormaktır” dedi. Toplumun da üniversiteyi algılaması budur işte. [...] Üniversite hocaları topluma nasıl bakıyor, peki? ‘Bizim eve gelen bir kadın var, süpürgeyi aldı masanın üstünü süpürdü, böyle pis!’, bu hocaların arasındaki konuşmalardan. [...] Git orada [ofis kapısı gösteriyor] hocalar ne konuşuyor ben sana söyleyeyim. ‘Valla o kadar basit bir soru sordum, herifler gene de yapamamışlar’. Öğrencisine yabancı, böyle hoca mı olur, soruyorum ben sana. [...] Toplumdan tamamen kopuk, ondan sonra iki hoca bir araya gelir ne olacak bu memleketin hali. İrtica. Olacak tabi, sen [hocalar] görevini yaptın mı, irtica ile mücadele adına sen ne yaptın? Bir tek anıtkabire yürüdün, ikincisini söyleyemezsin bana.”

do the university *hocas* see the society? ‘There’s a woman who cleans our house, she took the hoover to clean the table, she so dirty!’ this is from a chat between the *hocas*. Go there [showing the door] and see what they are talking about. ‘I asked such simple questions, but the guys still can not do them.’ So alienated from his students, I ask you, can you imagine such a *hoca*? [...] They are isolated from society completely but when two *hocas* come together, [they asked each other] what will happen to this country. *İrtica* [Islamic reactionism]. Certainly there will be so, did you [*hocas*] fulfill your duty, what did you do to struggle against *irtica*? The only thing they do is to visit the mausoleum [of Atatürk], you can’t name a second thing.”

For her, if universities become isolated and turn in to “ivory towers” where the doors are locked for the people outside, there will be nothing to do for the problems of Turkey, such as political Islam. However, dealing with problems by only criticizing is inadequate, like only walking to the mausoleum. Hence the mission of the university or academicians cannot only be “to sit, write and publish”, but also to *serve* society. Furthermore, doing only research activity alienates universities from the society. That is the reason why academicians have a negative image in the minds of many people, even the ones working within the universities. In contrast to the ideas of some academicians, for Nihat and Şevval, making research and publications cannot be the only mission. What Fatoş, and according to her the new paradigm recommend universities in order to overcome isolation is to serve the society through the mobilization of academicians and students for community service.⁸²

“Even in Indonesia, every year the university system mobilizes thousands of people to do community service. [...] what I observe abroad is that it is always the academicians who are active in these works. [...] A man [student] who is in civil engineering goes out and renovates the school of the village, the man in environment [environmental engineering] goes out and does

⁸² “Endonezya bile var, orada her yıl üniversite sistemi binlerce kişiyi mobilize ederek community service yapıyor, [...] Benim gözlemlediğim yurt dışında hep işin içinde hocalar var, [...] inşaattaki adam [öğrenci] gider köy okulunu tamir eder, çevredeki adam gider bir ormanın bilmem nesi yapılır, bilgisayar mühendisi bilgisayar öğretir, her meslekte yapılır, sen kendi projeni üretirsin ve düzenlersin çocuk hem kendi pratik kazanıyor, hem de oralara gidip o halkla bütünleşiyor, halka fikrini soruyor yani toplumla bütünleşik olarak toplumun sorunlarına çözüm üretiliyor.[...] “Toplumla Hizmet Uygulamaları” dersi sadece eğitim fakültesinde değil tüm bölümlere yayılmalı.”

something in forest, the computer engineer teaches how to use the computer, these can be done with every profession, you design and organize your projects, students both practice their jobs and integrate with the people, asks people their opinions and thus produces solutions to a societies problems in an integration with the society. [...] “Community service” practical course should not only be in [the curricula of] the Faculty of Education, it should be put into the [curricula of] other departments too.”

What she suggests to the universities is not only to research, publish or criticize on the problems that the society faces, but to participate directly into the “solution”. For her, it is the only way for academicians and students to “integrate” with the society. The must course of “Community Service” in the curriculum of all faculties of education is perceived as a means for the academicians, students and universities to fulfill their mission of *service*. This is why the volunteer projects that the organization carries on are within the mission of the university. Academicians and students can “integrate” with people; learn how they live and face the problems of the society, the “facts of Turkey” and produce solutions through volunteer work.

Ahmet *Hoca*, the only academician in the group who is from the Faculty of Education says that the aim of the course is to give “*toplumsal olma bilinci*” (consciousness of being social). Referring to the concept of “hidden curriculum” in educational sciences, he explained that the students of this faculty already knew the curriculum designed by the ministry, but they do not have any opinion about the “hidden curriculum”. For him, what such projects or the course of “Community Service” aims to do is to introduce not the official curriculum, but the hidden one. “Hidden curriculum” (Dimitriadis et. all, 2006: 5) is a concept used in the sociology of education which emphasizes the agency in the day-to-day regularities of schools in teaching and learning the knowledge present in the official curriculum and in its textbooks. He explained the concept briefly to me: while the curriculum is all the materials and instructions written by the ministry, the hidden curricula are, for instance, the school building, the behavior of teachers and the whole environment that the education activity is carried out. He pointed out that the students of faculties of education are graduated from their departments without learning anything about the schools and school system in Turkey. That is why they do not even know the meaning of the abbreviation *YİBO*. Thus he identifies the course and projects such as

those designed by FARPS as a practical means for the students to recognize “the hidden” they had not met before. As a response to my question on the meaning of *toplumsal olma* (being social), he referred to what Nergis, one of his students, had told him after she joined her first project.⁸³

“I met [Nergis] after a project and she told me ‘I can’t stand my friends anymore, *hocam*. They are complaining about a small pimple on their faces, a cell phone that they wanted from their fathers but he did not buy on that month, and their trousers that don’t match with their clothing. Could these be any problem? They’re worrying on the smallest, silly issues. I think they should go to the projects, too.’”

The problems presented are so individualistic and insignificant that they cannot be “real” problems, for Nergis, when compared to the problems she saw during the projects. Volunteering is seen as a means for learning what the “real” problems are and being *toplumsal* through comparisons with the lives of the people they meet during the projects.

Apple (cited in Dimitriadis et. all, 2006: 4-5) argues that the regularities of schools which are defined by him and many others as “hidden”, give the impression that schools are outside the limits of individuals, invested actors and groups as if they are “above politics”, although they are actually not. Thus what is “the hidden” is “the political” as well. In other words, the volunteers or students taking the “Community Service” course are expected to meet with “the political” environment through the projects in order to be introduced to the contradictions, institutions, structures, individuals, debates etc. in the society –to “the political”. Nevertheless the organization wants volunteers to meet with “the political” in a depoliticized way. It is no doubt important for Nihat, Ahmet *Hoca* and other leading figures to contribute in or to influence the worldviews of individual volunteers on how they perceive “the facts of Turkey”. In order to introduce “the hidden” or the facts, instead actively involved in politics, they suggest participating in solving the problems which is

⁸³ “[Nergis]’le bir proje sonrası karşılaştık ve bana şunu dedi: ‘Artık arkadaşlarıma katlanamıyorum, hocam. yüzünde çıkan küçücük bir sivilceden, babasından istediği ama ona o ay almadığı yeni cep telefonundan, kıyafetine uyumlu olmayan pantolonundan şikâyet ediyorlar. Bunlar sorun olabilir mi? Küçücük saçma meseleleri sorun ediyorlar. Bence onlar da gitmeli projelere”

defined in a depoliticized way). Although it seems to be quite “non political” in terms of motivation, the strategy of depoliticization of perceptions and acts is political. It is a new kind of politics that emerged in form of “disenchantment with politics” (Schedler 1996: 1) and responsabilizes individuals, rather than political power. Rose (2004: 2-3) states that anti-political themes are wide-spread in right-wing, left-wing and “no-wing” varieties of political move and they stress failings and limits of state in terms of welfare, crime control, education etc. Thus individuals, families, communities, employers take the power and responsibilities possessed by the state, politician and legislation since nineteenth century (ibid). On the one hand it is a kind of empowerment of the actors other than state. On the other hand, it paradoxically limits individual space for political demands and opposition. In this case, academicians’ position concerning volunteer’s conceptualization “the political” in a depoliticized way and participation the solving the problems -to some extend- can be regarded as the illustrations of the new politics of the present moment.

4.2.2 Importance of the Scientific Perspective

Beside these ideas on participation and non politics, volunteers’ experiences and practices give profound opportunities to understand their framework about the solution they suggest. Within this framework, discourse of hard-science is very dominant in the volunteers’ practices and interactions with the children. To clarify how they perceive “science”, I will illustrate a project which was held in Muş.

Just after every lunch time, a few volunteers hurriedly prepare some devices on the corridor of the schools. Some bottles, tubes, chemical materials, a model windup bird are some of the materials they are dealing with. Volunteers had done the necessary preparation for this project in Muş too, before Yavuz walked out of the main door confidently and wanted them to come closer to him calling out all the children loudly to turn their attention. A performance by volunteers started in an instance. Yavuz was the main actor of the performance that volunteers called *dış deneyler* (outdoor experiments) because the repertoire of the performance and its

equipments are appropriate for an outdoor exhibition⁸⁴. Before Yavuz started to present the experiments which were funny representations of some laws of physics and chemistry, he asked the crowd of children loudly: “Is there anyone who wants to be a scientist, a physicist, a chemist or a mathematician?”⁸⁵

Including the founding figures of the organization, most of the volunteers were either a student or a professional of “hard sciences” -such as physics or physics education- and engineering. There were also some other volunteers whose interests are health sciences, social sciences or education, but they were small in number. Some volunteers accept that other *activities* –on literature, cinema, drama, music, history-archeology etc- are dominated by many activities on “hard sciences”, but they added that it was because of the interests of the volunteers and those who designed the *activities* and projects. The children admire the volunteers and are really influenced by the *activities*, experiments and other practices made by them. They wanted to learn more about these professions and the universities that volunteers present as the places they come from. They often asked the volunteers whether they were scientists and if they had any inventions (particularly to the ones who have academic titles). Projects were really difficult times for me in terms of explaining which science I am interested in.

Encouraging children to deal with “hard science” is not only about the volunteers’ academic interests, it is also about what hard science means to them. According to the volunteers, science is one of the reasons for them to go to regional boarding schools in order to encourage the children to think and to question the world through raising their awareness about science and the scientific perspective. For instance Harun who is in his first year in a department of engineering lectured the most *activity* of physics. He explains what he aims to do in his *activity* hour:

I try to explain what science is, what questioning is. I want them to question their lives. For example, I discuss with children whether gravity exists or not. Those things help to generate different things in their minds. Once that spark

⁸⁴ There were also other experiments performed in the evening show usually at the halls of the schools.

⁸⁵ Aranızda fenci, matematikçi, kimyacı, fizikçi olmak isteyen var mı?”

is lighted, if it works, they start to think whether it could possibly be the opposite, when they see something. Thus they can't stick to that culture directly. I don't say that in just one day they will all be questioning and they will all continue their education, I don't say that the girls will start to wish to go on with their education even if hadn't wanted it before; the impact you made may not change their lives, but one day these children will be mothers one day. When she becomes a mother maybe she will have her daughter get education even if she herself couldn't have it. [...] it is necessary to give the ability of questioning, in order to demolish the ideas that culture imposes on them.”⁸⁶

In the quote, “that culture” refers to the traditions, beliefs and religion that underestimate science and causes the people not to let their children continue with their education. While Harun was in a school in the Southern part of Turkey, he was told about a *şeyh* (sheikh) that people queue for a long time just to kiss his hands. Harun added that the *şeyh* did not appreciate the people who let their daughters go to school:

“People believe in sheiks. If one [of the children] believes in sheiks, how can you demolish that [belief]? By providing people to start questioning. By showing something different from what they think. He/she thinks that a thing does not fly but you show him/her that it does”⁸⁷

The flying thing he referred to is what he used in the physics *activities*: a toy called *Levitron* which is magnetic anti-gravity ball. Harun warned me about the

⁸⁶ “Bilimin ne olduğunu açıklamaya çalışıyorum sorgulamak nedir. Hayatlarını sorgulamalarını istiyorum. Mesela yerçekimi var mı yok mu. Çocuklarla tartışmaya giriyorum çocuklar şaşırıyor mesela o şeyler çocukların akıllarında farklı şeyler oluşturuyor. O bir kıvılcım yaktıktan sonra tutarsa artık birşey gördükleri zaman acaba aksi de olabilir mi diye düşünmeye başlıyorlar. Direk o kültüre bağlı kalamıyor. Ben demiyorum 1 günde hepsi birden sorgulayacak hepsi birden okuyacak, kız çocukları okumak istemese bile okumak isteyecek demiyorum ama o yaptığın etki belki onlara dokunmayacak ama o çocuklar bir gün anne olacak o anne olduğu zaman belki o kızını okutacak. o çocuklar okumasa bile çocuklarını okutabilir. [...] kültürün onlara dayattığı şeyi yıkmaları için sorgulama yeteneği verilemeli”

⁸⁷ “Adamlar şeyhe inanıyor. [çocuklardan] bir tanesi şeyhe inansa bunu nasıl yıkarsın? Sorgulamasını sağlayarak insanların. Onu da düşündüklerinden farklı bir şey göstererek bir şey uçmaz diye düşünüyor ama uçtuğunu sen gösteriyorsun çocuğa.”

impossibility of changing the lives of the children through one project, one activity, or in one day. Nevertheless what they are doing is to introduce the children the scientific perspective that will eventually make sense for them because:

“If the child tries something, to do something in order to go to school, if he/she gains a little bit of that questioning, if he/she reads books, read those books on science and learns something about physics or chemistry, learns about science... Maybe that child will not be anything, he/she might be a tradesperson or work in the fields in the village, but maybe his/her child will get to a better position. You go to tens of thousands of children, say we gained 100 of them, we need to go to those tens of thousands of children to gain those 100 children.”⁸⁸

In his study of schooling conducted through an ethnographic research in a small town, *Yayla*, in Southern Turkey, Kaplan (2006) defines many politically motivated groups that lobby their differences through the highly centralized educational system. Besides being a source for political contestation, education is also perceived as a means for social salvation (ibid: xvi). For him, (ibid: 73-76) on the one hand school knowledge is perceived as an antithesis of popular knowledge and children are expected to apply the curriculum (which involves the negotiations and contestations between these groups) in their extracurricular environments. On the other hand, the public is never entirely separated from the dominant discourses that these groups formulate. People articulate their political selves through dominant discourses and these groups should acquire legitimacy and reach a consensus with the people. Therefore it is a reciprocal process. At the last instance, “the overall aim is for citizens to internalize their value systems as a part of national outlook and a native common sense.” (ibid: xviii). Basing on Kaplan’s ideas, I can say that there are many parallel pedagogies through which multiple groups desire to implement or influence on popular knowledge via state curriculum and school knowledge. The question is, which pedagogy or pedagogies will be used by the people. The concern

⁸⁸ “Çocuk bir şeyleri denese okumak adına bir şeyler yapma o sorgulamayı birazcık kazansa, kitapları okuyup, bilim kitaplarını okuyup, fizik kimyayı görse, bilim hakkında bir şeyler öğrense... O çocuk belki bir şey olmayacak, esnaf olabilir, köyde tarlada çalışabilir ama onun çocuğu belki iyi bir yere gelecek. On binlerce çocuğa gidiyorsun 100 tane kazandım diyelim ama 100 tane kazanman için o on bin çocuğa gitmen gerekiyor.”

of volunteers including Harun is about this contestation. He gives priority to the secular pedagogy of perceiving the world through laws of science, thinks that the salvation of the children and their children is tied to the elimination of “that culture”, that is to say, the other pedagogies.

4.2.2 Help to Self-Help

Another point of view that volunteers try to pedagogicize is the centrality of individual action and capabilities. They highlight the ideas and strategies based on individual actors. Nermin explained that what she is able to do is very limited, but this does not change the fact that she has responsibilities like everyone should have:

“For example I empathize with them. If I were in a village, if my mum and dad were farmers, I could not have been here [the university]. It is that simple. Not because I wouldn’t be able to do it, but because I wouldn’t be guided this way. It is impossible for every one to have equal conditions, maybe because of the system, but at least we can do our bests. [...] As a human, my duty, I have a social responsibility as much as everyone has. To fulfill it through this way is right and good.”⁸⁹

For her, the problems children have to confront are “systemic”, because they were not born in equal conditions with the families who are able guide their children. Although it is impossible to completely oppose the inequality described, she is capable of doing anything individually for the ones who suffer from this inequality, and this is her “social responsibility”. She continued explaining what she is able to do individually through defining her insights about the volunteer projects:

“[These projects are] giving them a chance, an opportunity, [saying that] we did this and you have nothing less than us, look I did it, you can do it too. I,

⁸⁹ “Ben mesela onların empati yapıyorum. Ben bir köyde olsaydım, annem babam çiftçi olsaydı, buraya [üniversiteye] gelemezdim. Yani bu kadar basit. Bunu yapamayacağımdan değil, böyle yönlendirilmeyeceğimden dolayı. Hepimizin eşit şeylere koşullar tabi tutulması mümkün değil belki sistemden ötürü, ama hani en azından yapabileceğimiz kadarını yapabiliriz. [...] Benim bir insan olarak üstüme düşen görev hani bir sosyal sorumluluk herkesin olduğu kadar. Bu şekilde yerine getirmek doğru bir şey, güzel bir şey.”

for myself, I did what I could do when I was in their ages, but my mother guided me. It was my mother who said that I should study hard, and I should get my education. If they need to be guided, I think I can guide them in this way, by being a good model, by studying, by at least being a model for them.”⁹⁰

Nermin has the capacity to meet the children’s need of guidance that is rooted in their families’ incapability. While comparing the structural and political, in her terms the “systemic,” with what she is capable of doing individually, she defined a kind of “powerlessness” which Arendt (1958: 199, cited in Eliasoph 1998: 17) states as being deprived of power means being deprived of reality. In her study on volunteers and activist in America, Eliasoph (ibid) indicates that participation makes individuals feel capable and powerful. However it is an instrumental kind of power which leads to a perception of some aspects of life as “humanly created and changeable” and “some others as natural and unmovable” (ibid). In this context, For Nermin, her “social responsibility” is what she or other actors have the power to do. Thus the real is setting up equality through guiding the children to study hard to get education and so contributing to the social mobilization of one or more children, or at least hoping it to be real.

The motive of guidance is a leading characteristic in volunteers’ practices and interactions with the children. For instance, volunteers communicate with children in a pedagogical manner based on advices and messages on many issues. While volunteers were having their lunch or dinner, they advised the children not to throw their food away, the reason they give is that children in Africa are starving, and all people, including these children, are responsible for Africa. Similar points were emphasized in the interactions I observed in activity hours. Nida, who was the volunteer doing the activity of “History and Archeology” tried to make the children

⁹⁰ “Bu fırsat eşitsizliği...belki de onlara da bir fırsat, onlara bir şans tanımak; biz yaptık ve sizin bizden hiç bir eksiğiniz yok; bakın ben yaptım, hani siz de yapabilirsiniz [demek]. Ben kendi adıma hani onların yaşındayken yapabileceğim şeyleri yapmaya çalıştım ve hani yaptım, ama beni annem yönlendirdi. Çalışmalısın okumalısın diyen kişi bana annemdi. Onların yönlendirilmeye ihtiyacı varsa, bu şekilde yönlendirebilirim diye düşünüyorum. İyi bir örnek olarak, çalışarak, en azından hani karşılına bir örnek olarak geçerek.”

conscious about the importance of historical areas and remains and advised them to give historical artifacts to museums if they ever find any. It was because illegal trafficking of historical artifact is something to be prevented by people responsible to their history. Volunteers were trying to give the children a sense of responsibility. The sense which children were expected to internalize was not only concerning the outside world, but it also required a full responsibility for their lives. In another activity which is called “Creative Drama”, children are separated into groups, after that they are briefly instructed to exercise some basic requirements for acting based on gestures, facial expressions and warming up. Each group is expected to make up a short drama and perform it. Volunteers just give one-word instructions to the children concerning themes such as school, village, house, hospital, class, teacher etc. Volunteers let them free for creating and performing on the given themes. Children enjoy this activity a lot and express their ideas freely, according to the volunteers. What is interesting about this activity is volunteers’ assessment of the outcomes. Volunteers perceive the text and performances of children as a representation of their real experiences on school, family and any other theme given. Once, performance of a group who was given the theme of “school” was very interesting. In the play they created a character -a girl- who does not attend to school for a while. A group of characters including the teacher, *muhtar* (elected governor of villages), and her friends would try to find out why she did not come to school. At first they would think that her father did not let her to attend, but in due time they found out that he was poor and could not afford the school expenses. Then they would launch an aid campaign for their friend and make her return. From the perspective of volunteers, one can read this play as a small resume of children’s milieu and experiences: girls who cannot get education, the role of families, particularly fathers, *muhtar* and teachers in their lives; poverty and strategies for coping with poverty. The act of having an aid campaign can be evaluated either as a familiar act that these children see or meet as a usual component of their daily lives, or as children’s expression of the insights they take from the volunteers, teachers, families, the curriculum etc... It is not an act of philanthropy which mobilizes only the donors and passivises the other party, but an act which activates the aided party, the children, and calls them for action and to take responsibility for themselves. It is

a strategy based on a “responsibilization” of individuals to “empower” for governing themselves by taking care of their own welfare (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002: 989).

What volunteer action means for volunteers is based on similar instances in which they do not perceive their activities as “aid” and themselves as “aider”. Volunteers prefer to mention the idea on their positionality many times throughout their interactions. The activity hours are crucial means for constructing their positions as volunteers. In the first moments of her activity of *Müzikli Oyunlar* [Games with Music] with 4th graders, Melda asked the class why did they, the volunteers, come, and whether they come to help the children. The children were cheerful, excited and without thinking they answered in one voice: “Yeeees”⁹¹ Melda asked it again in a sarcastic manner: “Did we come for help? Do you need help?”⁹² Children were surprised; they could not know what to say. Some said yes, some said no, but they were all mumbling. While observing this moment, I thought how confusing it was for the children to represent themselves as the ones who need help. In a few seconds, Melda took the floor, telling them since they did not need help, the volunteers had not come to help them and their intention was something different. When the project was over, I asked her what she thought on the motivation of herself and that of the organization. She more or less repeated her words in the class:

“I do not see it [volunteering] as helping. We are trying to get the village children to realize some things in their lives. Not that they do need help. Even if we don’t go there, those children will live there in one way or the other.”⁹³

What they do want children to be aware of is the attempts they can individually make. The volunteers aim to make them responsible for their own lives by being role-models as successful individuals and by restoring their self-techniques of self-confidence. In the quotation below Yavuz states why he emphasizes the necessity of individual trial.

⁹¹ “Eveeeet”

⁹² “Yardım için mi geldik? Sizin yardıma ihtiyacınız mı var?”

⁹³ “Yardım olarak düşünmüyorum. Köy çocuklarının hayatlarında bir şeylerin farkına vardırırmaya çalışıyoruz. Yoksa yardıma ihtiyaçları yok. biz oraya gitmesek de o çocuklar bir şekilde yaşayacaklar.”

“As a volunteer [my aim is] to widen their horizon, make them to feel something, that is to say, even at these times that we are present, to make them to feel that if they study hard, if they read books, your teachers will support you, someone will see you [your efforts]. You are not silly, you are worthy. We are human, the most intelligent beings, it is so crucial to make them to feel it, because, the children, especially the girls, feel themselves unworthy.”⁹⁴

On the condition that the children feel self-confident and motivated to study hard, they can have a chance of being supported and thus they can have better conditions. If the village children in regional boarding schools do not give up struggling against all the challenges they have to take by being successful at school, by having a scientific perspective, they will have the capacity to achieve many things like the hero and heroines of the stories that the head narrated. For Yavuz, the other way around is to give up struggling, which means that nothing would change. Similarly, Asiye states that attempts of the children are important if they really believe in themselves. In this context, individual successes together with self-confidence are the only way to struggle against poverty and gender inequalities.

“For example, his/her parents won’t let him/her go to school but if he/she trusts himself/herself and if she/he is really successful—but she/he has to have that sense of confidence. “My parents won’t let me go to school and they’ll marry me with someone, you rescue me, etcetera”, I remember a couple of such examples. [Instead they can say] “look, I am writing to the governor, I can go to school if they let me go, I can be successful.”. That is why success is a key in this sense; or, we tell them ‘if you are really successful we will give you scholarships for high school.’ We open the opportunity of scholarships, but still some sort of encouragement is

⁹⁴ “Gönüllü olarak [benim amacım] bu çocukların ufuklarını açmak bir şeyler hissettirmek yani bulunduğumuz saatlerde bile, eğer çalışırsanız kitap okursanız öğretmenleriniz destekleyecek birileri görecektir sizi bir yerlere geleceksiniz bunu hissettirebilmek. Aptal değilsiniz siz değerli bir varlıksınız. Biz insanız, en zeki yaratmışız, bunu hissettirmek bu çok önemli. Çocuklar çünkü kendilerini değersiz bir varlık olarak görüyorlar kızlar özellikle.”

necessary, and we should engrain that you should strive at least, you shouldn't give up saying 'my father will not send me to school anyway'".⁹⁵

Putting emphasis on individual attempts can be regarded as a way of ignoring the political instances of inequality. However Cruikshank thinks differently (1996: 231): While analyzing the self esteem idea which is spreaded by California Task Force to Promote Self-esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility in 1983, she (ibid) suggests that it is a new politics and set of social relations that do not leave politics and power. Rather, this idea offers to solve social problems not by waging a social revolution against inequalities but by waging a "revolution from within" against the order of the self and the way people govern themselves (ibid). In this context volunteers aim to change the way children govern their selves through being role-models to encourage them to overcome the difficulties and inequalities they face.

4.2.3 To Criticize versus To Change

Why volunteers insist on constructing themselves as role-models incorporates various perceptions on parents. Some of these are about volunteers' ideas that parents have an apathetic attitude towards their children. They strongly criticize the parents for accepting their situation, not motivating their children to struggle and just complaining about everything without making any effort to change. Asiyе advocates that children may probably have the same tendency with their parents. She explains how people and children should act against their inactive outlook through her practices in the activity hour:

⁹⁵ "Mesela annesi babası okutmayacak kendine güveniyorsa ve gerçekten çok başarılı ise işte ama güven duygusuna sahip olması gerekiyor. 'Beni annem babam okutmayacak da evlendirecek beni kurtarın bilmem ne' böyle birkaç tane örnek hatırlıyorum. 'Bak ben kaymakama gidiyorum böyle bir mektup yazıyorum hadi kızım oku deseler ben okuyabilirim ben başarılı olabilirim' [diyebilirler]. O yüzden başarı o anlamda bir anahtar; ya da ne bileyim, biz diyoruz ya çok başarılı olursanız size lisede burs vereceğiz diyoruz. Burs kapısını açıyor o anlamda gene de biraz teşvik etmek gerekiyor ve de şunu aşlamak lazım sen elinden geldiğince bunun için çaba göster en azından babam beni okutmayacak diye kenara çekime."

“For instance when I asked questions to children, for instance we pollute the environment, well, then who is responsible for this? I do not even accept the answer of “we,” I tell them “you must say “I”, because if the answer is “we”, it means that there are also others that are responsible so I put the blame on them and get rid of the responsibility. They should not expect everything from others all the time. [...]. We can never solve issues by putting the blame on a single side. Yes, there are things that the state should do and maybe it’s not doing these, or what it does may be inadequate. Yet, some things are up to ones self too, I instill responsibility in children. In addition, a very widely made mistake is, they [the children] hear complaints from their families so often that the state doesn’t do this and that. There’s someone complaining around them all the time. In the school their teachers are complaining that the school lacks this and that. At home their mothers and fathers are complaining that the state does not do this, the state does not do that. After a while they loose the confidence that they can do something themselves. Because they have learnt to blame others. Just like the role models that they see around, they also turn into that.”⁹⁶

For her, to complain about problems and to criticize imply putting individuals in a passive position through waiting for other actors to take action. The actor expected to act is the state. She does not advocate state’s withdrawal from social services and approves the primary role of the state in the promotion and protection of people’s social and economic well-being. What if the state is not concerned with or incapable of directing its resources to people? How parents reply this question indicates whether they are desirable role-models or not. Acceptance of present positions by

⁹⁶ “Mesela çocuklara bir şey sorduğum zaman atıyorum çevreyi kirletiyoruz peki bunun sorumlusun kim. Biz cevabını bile kabul etmiyorum ben diyeceksiniz diyorum çünkü biz olunca sorumlu başkaları da var ben ona atarım sorumluluğu işin içinden çıkarım. Her zaman herşeyi başkalarından beklememeleri gerekiyor [...]. Hiç bir zaman suçu tek tarafa atarak işin içinden çıkamayız. Evet devletin yapması gereken şeyler var yapmıyor olabilir, ya da yaptıkları yetersiz olabilir. Ama biraz insanın kendisinde de bitiyor bazı şeyler, ben çocuklar biraz sorumluluk alma şeyi aşıyorum. Bir de en çok yanlış yapılan şeylerden biri o kadar çok duyuyorlar ki ailelerinden işte devlet bunu yapmıyor. Sürekli etraflarında birileri şikâyet ediyor. Okulda öğretmenleri şikâyet ediyor okulda şu yok diye. Evde annesi babası şikâyet ediyor devlet şunu yapmıyor devlet bunu yapmıyor diye. Artık bir süre sonra kendilerinin bir şeyi yapabileceğine olan inançları kalmıyor. Çünkü sürekli başkalarını suçlamayı öğrenmiş oluyorlar çünkü etrafında görmüş oldukları rol modelleri gibi onlar da hani o hale geliyor.”

just complaining and expecting the state to fulfill its role also engenders a lack of confidence. In other words, the more one takes her/his own responsibility, the better one becomes a role-model. For her, criticizing the conditions or structures that cause inequalities does not contribute to any solution and changes nothing. Yavuz also thinks like that:

“I think criticizing is a very easy and simple thing, everyone can criticize. What is the point in criticizing? Look he/she does not have clothes, look there are children walking bare feet on the snow. So what? What should we do?”⁹⁷

What is defined as criticizing incorporates inaction, which does not necessitate any effort. For him, this is just “to speak” and to do nothing. However, what volunteerism suggests is to take action for solving the problems of people who need help. Rıdvan defines the features of ideal volunteers through considering the people who contribute a lot to the works of FARPS and become leading figures among the volunteers. They have two common characteristics:

“First and foremost, being responsive to the people around, to the lives of other. I think this is a must. [...] It is essential to have comprehended the importance of mobilizing. Not criticizing or doing something else, but mobilizing. I think this changes many things in the life of a person. It’s a difference if you take the garbage on the street instead of saying why there’s garbage all around. It’s close to the other side of the border, even if it hasn’t passed to the other side completely or not. For example when I see such a trait in people, the trait of intervening to something wrong, or correcting the wrong without criticizing it, really, not to complain, but to try to correct; I am feel there’s something common among ourselves with such people.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷ “Bence eleştirmek çok kolay, basit bir şey, herkes eleştirir. Ne var ki eleştirmede. Aaa kıyafeti yok, aaa çıplak ayakla kara basan çocuklar var. Yani? Ne yapmamız lazım?”

⁹⁸ “Bir kere en başta duyarlılık etrafındakilere, başkalarının yaşamlarına. Bu bence zorunlu. [...] En temelde harekete geçmenin önemini kavramış olmak. Eleştirmek ya da başka bir şey yapmak değil, harekete geçmek. O insanın hayatında çok şey değiştiriyor bence. Yolda bir çöp gördüğün zaman neden bu çöpler de burada demek yerine çöpü alıyorsan o bir farklılık hani. O sınırın diğer tarafına daha yakın oluyor, tamamen geçmiş ya da geçmemiş değil belki ama. Mesela şeyi hissettiriyor bende, bir kere onu gördüğüm zaman insanlarda o müdahale etme, yanlışta müdahale etme ya da yanlış

Apathetic and self interested personalities are not able to be volunteers according to him. Even if one is *duyarlı* (responsive), this is not enough in itself, because the second prerequisite is to mobilize. What he asserts concerning volunteer action is to participate by being involved in processes of solving problems without voicing any critics. Thus volunteer action and what is defined as “to criticize” are located in opposite realms. In order to clarify the boundaries through which he distinguishes volunteerism, I asked him to define what volunteerism is not by indicating given characteristics of “responsiveness” and “mobilization”. He demonstrated how he conceptualizes his act through comparing these notions with the characteristics of other students in his university:

“For instance half of the students do not think... People who question, think about the future of the country do not come here anymore. The thinking and responsive people are only as much as those over there [showing an area where student demonstrations usually take place], shouting in demonstrations. And I think the majority of those do not know why they are shouting anyway. If they knew, they wouldn’t be fighting against each other with stones and sticks. [...] but, to me they are on the side that just talks and criticizes. I can’t understand that for instance. The grades of the leftists or people have such things [thoughts] are low, aren’t they? Let’s take look, let’s make some statistics. They think that some things [political activities] are more important. However what you do is not the point of solution. By doing those things, by protesting the presidency, you can’t reach any goals. They tell me that if everyone protests, it will be, if everyone goes out to the streets, something will change. No it won’t change, because everyone does not go out. That is to say you are supposed to first rise above to make something change.”⁹⁹

eleştirmeden düzeltmeye çalışma. Hakkaten söylenip gitmek değil de düzeltmeye çalışmak. Onu gördüğüm insanlarda şeyi hissediyorum ortaklık hissediyorum.”

⁹⁹ Mesela öğrencilerin yarısı düşünmeyen ... Buraya artık sorgulayan insanlar, ülkenin geleceğini düşünenler gelmiyor. Yani işte düşünen, duyarlı kesim şurada [eliyle öğrencilerin gösteri yaptıkları bir alanı göstererek], eylemde bağırarak bir avuç kadar. Onların da çoğu neden bağırduklarının bence farkında değil. Farkında olsa taşla sopayla birbiriyle kavga etmezler. [...] ama bence onlar sadece konuşan, eleştiren taraftalar. Yani mesela şunu anlayamıyorum. Hani solcu ya da o şeydeki [düşüncedeki] insanların dersleri kötüdür değil mi? Gidip bakalım, istatistik yapalım. Şeyi daha

He distinguishes many students and places them in a category of “irresponsiveness” since they are apathetic to the agenda and social problems of Turkey. For him, they are not interested in any societal issues, they don’t even think about these. He perceives the people in left-wing student movements as responsive because they care and have questions about many social problems. However the instruments they use are what he defines as “to criticize”. Demonstrations, protests and many other collective actions engaged by social movements are seen as inaction and “demobilization”. Paley’s (2001: 146) conceptualization about “paradox of participation” offers a frame for interpreting what Rıdvan said. Participation gives a sense of meaning however it simultaneously limits and delegitimizes the space through which individuals and groups act and direct their demands. In other words people become less powerful through participation. What Rıdvan said also so similar that an official in Costa Rican ministry of health in Morgan’s ethnography: “Participation is not complaining about the service, that’s bad, and those who do are called communist” (1993: 165).

For this case, Rıdvan sees the space and the instruments social movements use to mobilize and direct collective demands as “demobilization”, because it changes or intends to change nothing. It is the sum of individual efforts --which leftist activists disregard by not concentrating on their own success-- that leads to the real change. Nevertheless he perceived the leftist student activists as “responsive” individuals as themselves, which is one of two prerequisites for being a volunteer.

His assessments on voluntary activity are not based on non-political grounds. On the contrary he sees such efforts and explanations as a strategy for them to act:

“You are affected from the smallest thing [any small political act] that you do, this [to be non-political] is something developed against this completely. [...] I think there’s no such thing as being non-political or apolitical. It is a kind of “politics” to say I don’t do politics. The literal meaning of politics is

önemli olduğunu düşünürler. Hâlbuki çözüm noktası yaptığın o değil ki. O şekilde yaparak rektörlüğü protesto ederek bir yere gelemezsin ki. Herkesi protesto ettiği durumda olur diyorlar bana, herkes sokaklara dökülse bir şey değişir. Değişmez abi, herkes sokaklara dökülmez çünkü. Yani senin bir şeyleri değiştirebilmen için önce bir yükseğe çıkman lazım.

just “the way you choose”. That’s why there is no way for not doing politics. That is why FARPS is politics; of course it is political in a way. It is focused on motivating children for education but in fact you want something more modern. But when the word “modern” enters [into the speech], then other words follow directly, “backwardness” and so-and-so come in. That’s why you don’t use the word “modern”, for example. Our only aim is that village children get education, because there is no such label in the word *okumak* (to read and to have education), so such issues don’t arise in people’s minds.¹⁰⁰

According to Rıdvan, since every word has a political connotation, when the word *çağdaş* (modern) is uttered, its opposite *gerici* (backward, not modern) is simultaneously called to mind, which is a word used within the Kemalist rhetoric for referring to Political Islam. What is emphasized is just the word *okumak* (getting education) which is interpreted as not being so “politicized” yet, compared to other words. That is why the depoliticized discourse and the words chosen accordingly is a strategy for them to act without being stigmatized.

For Rıdvan both leftist student activists and the FARPS volunteers show interest in social issues, have political ends and the will to take action, however the strategies of the other party is completely different and even violent. Nermin makes similar points about the approach and strategies of other activists in her university who represent themselves as left-wing students. However she does not only challenge their instruments and strategies:

“Well they are doing something but going [anywhere] as if you’re going to war... If you try to do something with good intentions, if you are against it [injustice], I think that you should not do this in such a manner, etcetera. [...]
Well I always kept myself away. I don’t know. I preferred not to take sides.

¹⁰⁰ Yaptığın en ufak bir şeyden çat diye etiketlenirsin, bu tamamen buna karşı geliştirilmiş bir şey. [...] Politik olmamak, apolitik olmak diye bir şey yok bence. Ben politika yapmıyorum demek bir nevi politikadır. Politikanın kelime anlamı “seçtiğin yol” zaten. O yüzden bir şansın yok siyaset yapamama gibi. O yüzden [FARPS] bir politika, tabi ki bir şekilde siyaset. Şey merkezinde toplanmış, çocukların okuma hevesi kazandırma merkezinde toplanmış aslında daha çağdaş bir şey istiyorsun. İşte “çağdaş” kelimesi girdikten sonra oradan sonra başlıyor, işte gericilik şunlar bunlar çat diye geliyor. O yüzden çağdaş kelimesini kullanmıyorsun mesela. Tek amacımız köy çocuklarının okuması, okumak kelimesinde böyle bir etiket yok çünkü. İnsanlar aklından böyle bir şey geçirmiyor.

It always seemed to me that politics is something polluted, it still seems so. No matter how good it [the intent] is, they lose all the clean and good things in that pollutedness. They do not allow a chance or give an opportunity. How can I say, that's why I almost don't have any political view."¹⁰¹

Unlike Rıdvan, she does not evaluate volunteer activity as something political. The unappreciated way of the leftist students' strategy is related with their politically shaped behavior. It is also the reason why she keeps herself distant from politics, which is a "polluted" realm. Contemporary conceptualization of politics is not only "polluted" as Nermin claims, but also unnecessary, parasitic and rent-seeking (Özyürek, 2006: 5). The explanations for these views based on the transformation of political field within neo-liberal ideology, which is named as "post-political" by Zizek (1999: 198, cited in *ibid*) because of the delegation of authority from politicians to technocrats: as "anti-political" by Schedler (1997: 5, cited in *ibid*) because of the conception of society which is market driven self-regulated, self-sufficient machine.

¹⁰¹ "Bir şeyler yapıyorlar işte, ama hani savaşa gider gibi gitmek... Eğer sen iyi bir amaç uğruna bir şeyler yapmaya çalışıyorsan, buna [adaletsizliğe] karşı isen bu tavırla yapmamalısın falan filan diye düşünürüm. [...] Hani hep uzak durdum. Bilmiyorum. Hani tarafsız kalmayı tercih ettim. Bana hep politika siyaset filan kirli gelmiştir hala da öyle. Ne kadar güzel olursa olsun o kirliliğin içinde, o temizliği o güzelliği de boğuyorlar. İzin vermiyorlar, fırsat vermiyorlar: Nasıl diyeyim o yüzden de benim politik görüşüm yok gibidir."

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis was based on a field study conducted on a volunteer organization whose area of activity is education. The organization can be considered as a peculiar one because the network among actors is based only on the relations in three universities. Moreover the organization which incorporates a foundation, student clubs and a center has organic relation with three universities in Turkey. Through participant observation of their volunteer projects done for the target group –who is defined by them as “village children” at elementary school ages, getting their compulsory education in *YİBOs* as boarding students- and interviewing with volunteers and leading figures of the organization, I aimed to explore how volunteers perceive, define, practice volunteerism and how and on what grounds they differentiate their action from “politics”.

Without forgetting the diversity within the organization, I can say that defining volunteerism as “non-political” activity is the main tendency of the organization. Volunteer activity and political activity are completely opposing categories for volunteers; because volunteerism is belong to realm “doing good” or “non-political”. This ethnography, both as a *process* and a *product*, is thus grounded on the etic and emic categories and approaches, made by the researcher and informants. While the data shows how people try to keep themselves distance from politics and identify their action in the realm of non-political, I, as a researcher, aimed to understand the social and cultural milieu that shape the idea of “non-political” as a specific way of “politics”. Thus, the dichotomy begins from the beginning that I call “politics” what the “natives” called as non-politics, from Foucault’s point of view that identifies politics as the power relations intrinsic to the all encounters in daily life.

How volunteers drew the conceptual boundary between these categories was my core points of inquiry throughout the thesis. In order to depict the distinction, I followed not only what they said, but also what they do, how they practice and experience.

First of all, I interpret the means, ideas and practices through which they can represent themselves as non-political as strategies and negotiations. The way they define and introduce themselves whether as a foundation or a volunteer student and academicians from universities is one of these strategies. Despite the widespread definition of civil society and NGOs as a third space, which is seen as differing from the state as it is not political and differing from the market as it is not profit-based, volunteers of FARPS perceive the NGOs surrounded civil society as “political”. However they perceive themselves as “non-political”. Since, they see confrontation between political Islamist and secular, Kemalist organizations dominates civil society realm; they followed a strategy of representing themselves as not *vakıf*, but academicians *-hocas-* and students from university. Identification through “being a member of university community” and “engaging in (hard-)science and education are considered as “doing good”, non political and neutral categories which have not “spoiled” by “politics”, yet.

Thus the relation between “the political” and “non-political” is firstly constructed in accordance with the axis of secularism and political Islam. Kurdish question constitutes another axis which shapes their representation and consideration about “the political”. On the one hand, discouraging children to sing Kurdish song is accepted as a strategy for being neutral. On the other hand, in a Kurdish populated area much emphasis on speaking Turkish is another challenge for them in terms of constructing the distinction between “the political” and “non political”. These boundaries also shape their practices and strategies. The strategies of being “non political” based on the criteria of “how are we perceived by them?”, and “how do we seem like “them””? As strategies of being “non political”, the organization set up many rules which controls their apparel. These strategies mostly restrict the female volunteers in terms of their clothes and manner. Moreover the criteria of being “non political” (which is defined basing on the confrontation of the axis of secularism-

Islamism and Kurdish question-Turkish nationalism) characterize the features of donors, representation in media, and their relations with external actors.

Other etic categories through which I analyse the data are “problems” and “solutions”. Volunteers always defined some problems that their practices are addressed. These problems are mostly comprehended as “facts” of Turkey. Their definition of these facts (or problems) of their target group characterizes their views on their own practice and the conceptual frame of the solution they offered. The practice of volunteerism lies at the heart of their conceptualization of problems and solutions. The language, classifications and concepts, which are used while defining problems and solutions, indicate how they perceive “the politics”. For instance, the organization suggests education as the only cure for all the problems of particularly the “village children” and generally the society face. Seeing education within this perspective is not new and surprising when considering the historical construction of nation-states, including Turkey. However what is peculiar to this historical moment about the notion of education is its changing position. It was previously grounded on the political reproduction of the society in accordance with nation-state regime; however it is now offered for reproduction of the individual who is disadvantageously positioned. Education is perceived as not only a mean for transforming the society, it becomes a strongly desired catalyst for “breaking the chains”, that is to say, social mobilization of the individual.

Correspondingly, the volunteer group who is the members of networks within university perceives the role of the university and thus role of themselves differently. It is assigned as “serving the public” through which they think that the strong distinction between academia and society is thought to be disappeared. The new role offers direct “participation” to the solutions for the social problems, rather than just criticizing. Moreover universities should be re-designed and integrate their students to the “participation” process enabling students to learn “the facts” and gain a perspective in understanding and prescribing solutions. In this context, another issue that I often mentioned about the role of education in children’s life and role of university in society is the dichotomy between “individual” and “structural”. Even though some volunteers have insights about the structural inequalities the children face, they still stress on the individual stories and individual capabilities for breaking

down the challenges, because it is impossible to resist to the structures. While emphasizing the space where individuals have capability to act, what they refer is “change”. However, highlighting “structure”, which is seen as a way of thinking or acting, limits the space of individual, indicates “criticizing”, inaction and thus continuity.

These conceptual distinctions between “the individual” and “the structural” and between change and continuity are influential in many aspects. For instance, the moment of interaction among volunteers and children also contributed to the process of volunteers’ identification of their selves through identifying their differences from the children. Preserving the heterogeneity to some extent, volunteers are middle-class, educated and mostly urban people. Thinking through comparisons between childhoods of the “village children” and themselves constituted the base for the perceptions of volunteers. Most of them identify the current situation, “the facts” through fate and luck, which depoliticize, naturalize the differences they define and dissociate them from structural analysis. The reason why children are “unfortunate” and “unsuccessful” whereas volunteers are “fortunate” and “successful” is the families who are unable to motivate their children. For volunteers, families do not motivate themselves, as well and only complaint about their conditions which made them dependent subjects and unable to take responsibility for their lives and children. “Motivation” and “success” are emerged as new “techniques of self” in Foucauldian terms. The focus is shifted from “social (or political) revolution” to “revolution within”, which means individuals are the only and compulsory responsible for their own wellbeing. It is a dialectical process that responsabilization of the individual calls a conceptualization of wider world through individual agents; and individualization of the agents necessitates more responsible individuals, which abandons “the political” and engenders “non political”.

What volunteers offered is “not to criticize” because it de-responsibilizes self and lead to inaction. Where as the attempts for “changing” responsabilize individual and necessitates mobilization and action. Many volunteers locate the category of “political” in “criticizing” which is “dirty”, violent because of using wrong means and, unable to change nothing; however “the volunteer” is “responsive”, “good”, and has the capacity “to change” inequality and injustice to a certain extend in

individual level. On the one hand, the regime of responsabilization can be evaluated as an empowerment of the individual; on the other hand, it paradoxically embodied powerlessness and limits the space where people direct their demands. Owing to the idea of powerlessness, they associate structural and political analysis with continuity, inaction and uselessness.

This thesis tried to indicate what is defined as “volunteer” or “non political” is a new kind of politics in this historical moment through emergence of self-regulated subjects. I do not mean that these techniques create depoliticized, apathetic subjects. On the contrary, what I mean, the definition of “the political” and the way it is exercised, experienced and conceptualized the world has change. In this context Universities has a certain role in production and reproduction of the “new politics”, not only in process of producing knowledge, but also producing its practice. Universities can be inquired as spaces where shapes the “repertoire” of the young subjects about the meaning and practice of “the political” and offered legitimate or illegitimate way about their response. For instance the informants meet many political issues (which were named as “hidden curriculum or “facts” of Turkey) through these volunteer projects which prescribe certain perspectives for approaching many issues: the “Community Service” course is one of the spaces that this practice exercised.

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