Investigating the "Politics of the Local" in Peace Processes:

The Case of Turkey's Peace Process for Solving the Kurdish Issue (2009-2015)

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Investigating the "Politics of the Local" in Peace Processes:
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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an investigation on the "politics of the *local[2]*" in peace processes for the purposes of understanding the way norms and ideas regarding peacebuilding diffuse to domestic contexts and the way they are adopted, adapted, rejected, and renegotiated by local actors. Building on recent theoretical interest in "local agency" in both international norm diffusion and critical peace studies research, this study attempts to deepen and broaden our understanding of the local through the recognition of the agency of local actors in respect to their diverse expectations from peace process design. The study is based on the investigation of the politics of the local in Turkey's resolution/peace process that was initiated in 2009 and stalled in 2015, with the purpose of solving the Kurdish conflict. Main findings point to the importance of conflict resolution initiatives in "lesson learning" and "experience sharing" in peace processes.

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[1] This working paper rests upon the author's Ph.D. dissertation titled "Reconsidering Hybridity: The Selective Use of International Norms In Turkey's Resolution/Peace Process" submitted to Bilkent University Political Science Department in January 2019. Part of the research for this paper was conducted at the University of Denver Conflict Resolution Institute from April 2016 to March 2017.

[2] The "local" in this paper is used in its broad sense, referring to the domestic actors (including high-level decision makers and middle-level influentials) and their relations in the peace negotiation context. The interest in the "local" in peacebuilding can be distinguished in two waves. The first wave is early peace scholars such as Lederach's (1999) focus on the empowerment of local actors as a key for peacebuilding. The second wave of interest in the local emerged out of the critique of top-down peacebuilding. Scholarship focusing on international peacebuilding has conventionally understood the "local" in its opposition to the "international" actors and practices in peacebuilding. For a critical reappraisal on what the 'local' refers to in the context of international peacebuilding, see, for example, Paffenholz (2015) and Mac Ginty (2015).

Introduction: Turkey's Peace Process for Solving the Kurdish Issue

Turkey entered a period of transformation regarding the Kurdish issue in the second half of the 2000s. Signals for this transformation were given by the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan in a speech he delivered in Diyarbakır in August of 2005 (BBC Türkçe, 2005). This speech was preceded by a call in June of 2005 by a group of 130 intellectuals including writers, journalists, business persons, and artists made to the armed insurgency to end its armed activities and to government officials to realize legal arrangements that would secure a peaceful participation to politics (CNN Türk, 2005). In his speech, Erdoğan acknowledged past wrongdoings of the Turkish state towards part of its citizens. Signalling a move away from such wrong doings, Erdoğan stated that the Kurdish problem would be solved through democratization, giving the signals for moving beyond military solutions to the conflict. Both Erdoğan's speech and the intellectuals' call signalled their expectations for moving towards a political solution regarding the conflict through a negotiation framework.

Turkey's peace process was initiated in 2009 as a national policy for the resolution of the Kurdish conflict. The process started with the Kurdish Opening in 2009, later named as the Democratic Opening and finally titled the Unity and Fraternity Project in 2010. This initial period focused on addressing long-voiced democratic demands of the Kurdish population. These demands involved calls for recognition of Kurdish identity, cultural rights and decentralization in an effort to strengthen local government. Simultaneously, secret negotiations were ongoing between 2008 and 2011 which were leaked to the media in 2011. This initial process was interrupted with the escalation of the conflict in 2011 and 2012 and the return to a security discourse.

The second phase of the peace process resulted in peace talks that commenced in January 2013 after the first visit of a group of Kurdish politicians to the prisoned leader of the Kurdish insurgency. The 2013-2015 process was the first time that an open dialogue channel was created between the different sides of the conflict. During this process, the group made regular visits to the imprisoned Kurdish leader and to the armed leadership. Additionally, several mechanisms were established. One such mechanism was the formation of the Wise People Commission (WPC) in 2013 with the purpose of understanding societal expectations from the peace process. Another significant development was the formation of the Resolution Process Commission in the Parliament. Legal developments such as the Law on the Termination of Terror and the Strengthening of Societal Cohesion (TBMM Official Gazette, 2014a) and the Rules and Procedures Regarding the Law on the Termination of Terror and Strengthening Societal Cohesion (TBMM Official Gazette, 2014b) took place during the second half of 2014 as well.

The peace process stalled in mid-2015 after disagreements over issues such as the timing of the DDR process, possible third-party roles, issues pertaining to power- sharing (e.g. the question of local government), and the question of how and when to address transitional justice. During the process, a clear negotiation framework was not set up. Furthermore, the impact of internal and external political developments revealed the vulnerability of the process in terms of responding to stressors.

Turkey's peace process for solving the Kurdish conflict is crucial on several grounds. First of all, this was the first instance when a Turkish government decided to address the conflict openly in non-military terms. This signalled a partial move away from the previously applied traditional securitized approach (Çandar, 2009; Yıldız, 2012) that has dominated the official approach towards the conflict, especially since the formation of the Kurdish insurgency in the early 1980s. By deciding to initiate open talks for solving the conflict, the government for the first time accepted different actors from the pro-Kurdish side as interlocutors for addressing the conflict. For the first time in the history of Turkey, a solution outside of a military approach was discussed and the possibility for a negotiated peace became a reality.

Secondly, the peace process revealed the diversity of perspectives on expectations of peace. By moving to publicly discussing possible pathways for solving the conflict in the framework of negotiations, perspectives that could not previously be expressed became visible. Different actors expressed their expectations on disarmament and demobilization, democratization and human rights, justice mechanisms for addressing past violations, and power-sharing mechanisms. Furthermore, statements by primary actors including political and armed actors revealed how different sides to the conflict are divided amongst themselves and might express varying opinions on their expectations from peace. Accordingly, instances of diverse opinions were voiced frequently in the media.

Thirdly, the peace process in Turkey gave signals for an interest in adopting international perspectives and also "learning" from the experiences of negotiated settlements and mechanisms used around the world. The call for a Disarmament-Demobilization-Reintegration framework is an example. The formation of the Wise People Commission with the purpose of increasing inclusivity and public buy-in is another case in point. Similarly, discussions on transitional justice mechanisms such as the call of pro-Kurdish side for the formation of a truth and reconciliation commission is another instance revealing the process of adopting ideas and practices from elsewhere. Furthermore, discussions on a "third eye" (i.e. the call for a third-party role in the peace process) were partially made through references to the experiences of negotiated settlements outside of Turkey.

Focus and Methodology

The study is based on the investigation of the case of Turkey's peace process for solving the Kurdish issue (2009-2015)[3] as a case of a peace process in the absence of a top-down design by an external third-party. Externally-led top-down design in this study refers to the design of the peace process by an external third-party. In the post-Cold War period examples of externally-led top-down design of peace processes are numerous. The degree of external involvement in the design of the peace process can be regarded as a continuum ranging maximalist institutional design (e.g. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo) to low levels of involvement (e.g. South Africa). This study examines Turkey's peace/Resolution Process as a case where such externally-led top-down design was absent.

Two caveats are at place. First, it should be noted that the peace process in Turkey was designed in top-down manner through decisions taken by primary actors such as political leaders. Both in the initial phase including the Kurdish/Democratic Opening and the Unity and Fraternity Project (2009-2011) and during the Resolution Process (2012-2015) primary decision makers from the Turkish and Kurdish sides negotiated and decided on issues about what, when, how, and what to negotiate. Such top-down design is a common feature of peace processes around the world. However, the Turkish case is investigated in this study as a case where decisions on peace process design were taken by national parties and not external third-parties. In addition, this study examines Turkey's peace process as a case where *direct* design is absent. While some foreign parties might have played a role in the process at varying degrees, this role was limited to facilitation (e.g. the role of Norway and Great Britain during the Oslo process). Therefore, direct design of the peace process by third parties was absent. Based on these considerations, this study focuses on Turkey's peace/Resolution Process as a process that proceeded as a national effort to promote political solution to the conflict (moving beyond military solutions that dominated the efforts to solve the conflict since the late 1980s).

This study's theoretical interest in Turkey's peace process originated with an empirical observation: the use in domestic political discourse in the peace process in Turkey of international norms and practices that are part of the liberal peacebuilding

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[3] This study acknowledges that the peace process in Turkey for solving the Kurdish conflict encompasses two distinct periods that are separated by a period of conflict escalation from 2011 to 2012. The first period from 2009 to 2011 includes the Kurdish/Democratic Opening and Unity and Fraternity processes. The second period from 2012-2015 is commonly referred to as the Resolution Process. For convenience purposes, this study refers to the case under investigation as "Turkey's peace/resolution process for solving the Kurdish conflict, 2009-2015".

framework mainly projected and adopted by international organizations and donor agencies in externally designed top-down peace processes. High- and middle-level actors in Turkey made references to the norms and practices that form part of international peace processes. Actors made references to normative and practical standards such as Disarmament-Demobilization-Reintegration and transitional justice mechanisms such as truth commissions in addition to their selective references to experiences from other peace processes. Accordingly, primary actors' references to the manner in which the Irish Republican Army (IRA) decommissioned its weapons and the method whereby South Africans came to terms with past injustices through restorative justice mechanisms and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) revealed the need for understanding the dynamics of how such ideas diffused to the local context in Turkey.

Peace negotiations are essentially political processes whereby actors from different sides of a conflict negotiate a possible solution to the conflict. Generally, opposing sides maintain differing opinions on the characterization of the conflict and its development over time. Accordingly, negotiations towards the establishment of a peace settlement are generally marked by a meta conflict over what the conflict is about and over how to address it. This meta conflict is marked by the agency of local actors ranging from political decision makers to midlevel influentials. In the process of negotiating peace, actors support specific positions and seek to legitimize these positions to different audiences. Furthermore, different sides of the conflict in the negotiation process and different levels of actors are also divided regarding their opinion on how to achieve a peaceful settlement. Accordingly, political and armed fractions are divided regarding their expectations. Also, political fractions in themselves might have diverging opinions on their expected outcomes from a peace process. Therefore, understanding these different dynamics of local agency is crucial for understanding the dynamics of the peace process as a whole.
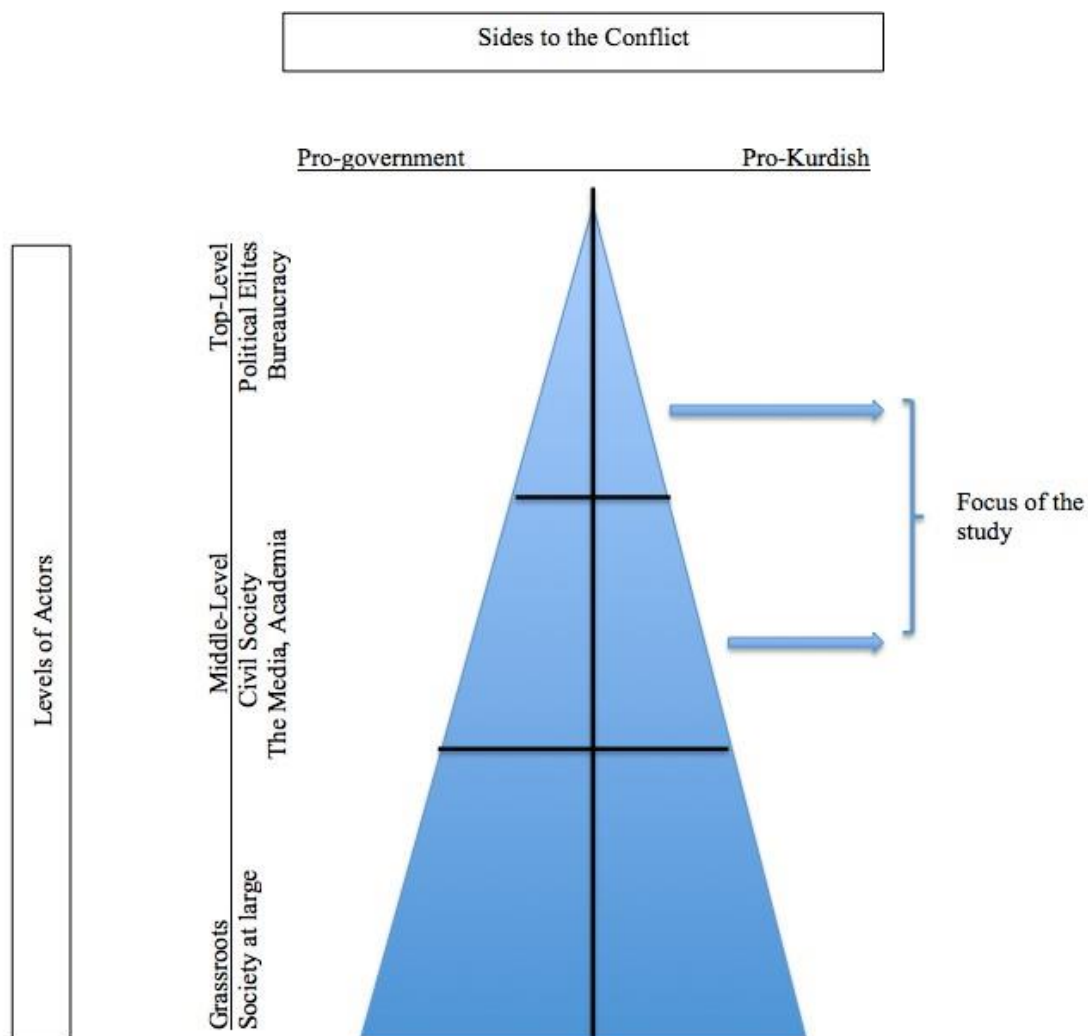
Peace processes that are initiated by an external third-party differ from those that develop in the absence of such third party involvement on several grounds. Power asymmetries between third parties and local actors especially in cases of "peace operations"[4] to end conflict have a great impact on the agency of local actors. In such cases, the design of the process (i.e. decisions on the issues of when, with whom, what, and how to negotiate) is primarily defined in a top-down manner by international actors such as the United Nations (UN) and donor agencies. This top-down design has been the center of an increasing critique whereby international domination and local subordination (Björkdahl & Gusic, 2015, p. 268) are seen as creating a problematic structure.

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[4] Referring to the post-Cold War international peacebuilding operations by international agencies and mainly the United Nations (UN). For an extensive analysis and critical perspectives of post-Cold War peacebuilding, see Paris and Sisk (2009).

Another central difference between these kinds of peace processes is related to the dynamics of norm diffusion. Scholarship on peacebuilding has debated how third party interventions during the post-Cold War period formed a "channel" through which specific principles organizing social and political life were channelled to post-conflict societies (Paris, 2002). Therefore, the activities of third parties form a platform through which liberal principles such as democracy, human rights, market economics, and judicial structures of a specific kind are projected onto populations. In the absence of such a channel, the question of through what kind of mechanisms such norms and practices might diffuse to the local context remains crucial.

With the purpose of investigating the "politics of the local" in the Turkish case this study is based on single case study design and grounded methodology. The analysis provided in the following sections rests on interview data collected during September 2015-March 2016 in Turkey with high- and middle-level actors who played a role in the Resolution Process in Turkey. The figure below indicates the focus of this study with regards to actors in Turkey.

Figure 1: Focus of the Study with Regards to Actors in Turkey[5]

In a peace process, not all actors can be clearly known from the beginning. While main actors such as party members that participate to the peace negotiation process are well known through the media, other actors "behind the scenes" often do not make any appearance in the media. Many times it may also be difficult to track those actors in the reports and other documents published regarding the process under investigation. For this reason, the snowball technique is also used as a second strategy in getting the names of such actors. The snowball technique is very useful in getting access to 'behind the scenes' actors, as interviewees are often willing to share the contact information of other potential actors to talk with. This is an important issue especially in cases where people to be contacted are retired professionals whose contact information is not available any more. Considering that personal contacts can be kept long after the end of professional relationships, the snowball technique offers the best means for access.
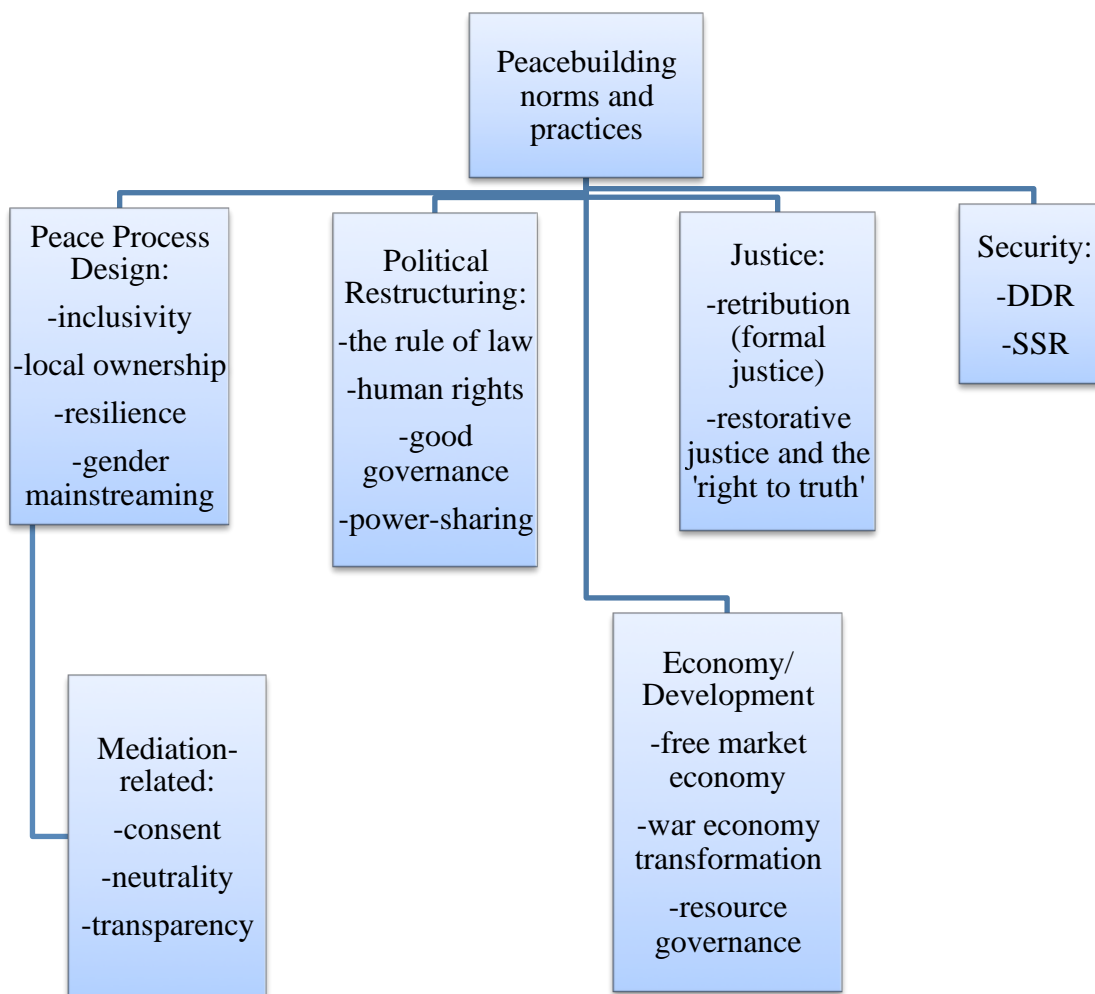
International Norms in Peace Processes

This study is interested in the diffusion of norms related to peacebuilding in the domestic context in the absence of an external intervener such as the UN. Here the concept of peacebuilding is used in its broad sense, referring to the process through which parties to a conflict engage in the process of building peace with the purpose of overcoming past divisions. Peacebuilding involves the set of activities undertaken to address issues such as the design of peace negotiation process, political and security issues, and the justice mechanisms that would address conflict-period abuses and deficiencies.

The peacebuilding norms that are addressed in this study include both norms and practices that have long become part of the UN peacebuilding framework and also norms and practices that are increasingly seen as part of a peace negotiation processes. There is no exhaustive list of peacebuilding norms. As Jabri notes, "there are different practices seen to constitute peacebuilding: the demobilization of militias, the reintegration of child soldiers into their families and neighbourhoods, the setting up of truth and reconciliation commissions, the trials of war criminals, compensation measures for victims, the reform of security sectors, gender and human rights awareness training, the reinstitution of industries and the monitoring of elections" (Jabri, 2013, p. 8). Liberal thought and practice on peacebuilding come to constitute what might be labelled as international normative consensus on how a peace process should proceed, what kind of standards should be included and also what kind of principles should be considered.

Based on the above, I compiled the following list of norms and practices related to peacebuilding:

Figure 2: Peacebuilding Norms and Practices

The typology provided in Figure 1 distinguishes between four main areas of peacebuilding and two primary types of norms that are relevant in the peacebuilding context. The four areas of peacebuilding are peace process design, politics, justice, and security. The two types of norms are process-related and content-related norms. Looking at the distinction between content and process related norms, content related norms refer

to *what* is negotiated while process related norms refer to the design of the negotiation process, i.e. *how* to negotiate. The design of the peace process involves questions such as when the negotiation should start, with whom to negotiate (i.e. who will be included in the negotiation table), the question of what to negotiate, and the question of how to negotiate.

- *Inclusivity[6]*

Inclusivity refers to the extent and manner the views and needs of conflict parties are represented in the peace process (UN Guidance for Effective Mediation 2012, p. 11). This definition indicates that inclusivity is both a process-related and content-related norm (Hellmüller, Palmiano Federer, & Pring, 2017, p. 16), as, in a peace negotiation process inclusivity might both be a subject of negotiation and also part of the question of how to negotiate (i.e. the way the negotiation process would proceed).

- *Local Ownership*

Local ownership can be defined as "the extent to which domestic actors control both the design and implementation of political processes; in peace processes, the term conveys the common-sense wisdom that any peace process not embraced by those who have to live with it is likely to fail" (Donais, 2009, p. 3). Local ownership has different meanings ranging from responsiveness, consultation, participation, accountability, control, to sovereignty (Chesterman, 2007, p. 10). From this perspective, ownership may refer to, on the one hand, how the local population regards peacebuilding policies as their own, and, on the other hand, to the extent to which the local population participates in decision-making processes and how these structures are accountable.

- *Resilience*

The concept of resilience has been extensively used in the recent decades in varying areas relevant to peacebuilding including international development and humanitarian aid, terrorism and counterterrorism, and global governance (Bourbeau, 2015). Resilience in peacebuilding has been generally understood as referring to the capacity of societies to self-organize so that they maintain and increase their ability to adapt to stress and risk (de Coning, 2016, p. 173). It refers to "the capacity of a social system to mitigate or recover from a violent shock or long-term stressors to maintain peaceful function" (Van Metre & Calder, 2016, p. 7). Resilience is understood as an inherently dynamic and complex process of "patterned adjustments adopted by a society or an individual in the phase of endogenous and exogenous shocks" (Bourbeau, 2015, p. 375).

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[6] Due to space concerns, here only a selection of the norms provided in Figure 1 is explained briefly.

- *Gender Mainstreaming*

Gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding is a strategy derived from the gender equality norm that encompasses equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and men. It means that "both women's and men's voices are heard in all decision-making processes at all levels" (Sandole-Staroste, 2011, p. 226). Gender mainstreaming is widely adopted by the UN which acknowledges that "mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities including policy development, research, and implementation of programs"[7].

- *Disarmament-Demobilization-Reintegration*

DDR is a central element in negotiated transitions to peace. It is a comprehensive process that aims at contributing both to immediate security needs and also more generally to stability by engaging with the longer term social, economic, and political integration of ex-combatants. As its name signifies, DDR is composed of three elements: disarmament (i.e. the collection, documentation, control, and disposal of light and heavy weapons from combatants and even from civilian population); demobilization (i.e. the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces); and reintegration (namely the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status)[8]. Ex- combatants may include government forces, opposition rebel groups and irregular armed groups.

- *Transitional Justice*

The International Court for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) defines transitional justice as "an approach to achieving justice in times of transition from conflict and/or state repression. Transitional justice mechanisms involve different types of initiatives including trials, commissions of inquiry, amnesties, vetting, restorative justice, and traditional justice (Sriram, 2017). By trying to achieve accountability and redressing victims, transitional justice provides recognition of the rights of victims, promotes civic trust and strengthens the democratic rule of law" [9] . Retributive justice mechanisms include criminal prosecution through national and international tribunals with the purpose of promoting accountability for those who committed human rights violations and crimes against humanity in periods of conflict. Restorative justice is more communitarian and focuses on transforming relationships with the objective of promoting reconciliation.

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[7] United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, "Gender Mainstreaming: Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality", August 2001, available at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet1.pdf (last accessed 3 December 2015).

[8] Derived from United Nations Peacekeeping page: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/ddr.shtml (last accessed 3 December 2015).

[9] ICTJ website, available at https://www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice (last accessed 25 December 2015).

High- and Middle-Level Actors' Perspectives on Peace Process Design

Ideational diffusion is closely related to the actors' effort to situate the peace process in Turkey within international ideas and practices contextualized through references to other cases of peace processes. Almost all interviewees (31 out of 34 interviews) made some kind of reference to other cases of negotiated solutions to peace processes. This means that nearly all interviewees made references to experiences from other cases of negotiated peace settlement and sought to situate part of the ideas and practices they discussed in light of these experiences. The purpose of this section is to analyze which issues were referred to in relation to international examples and discuss the reasons for it. Furthermore, this part also analyzes the question of how the specific ideas that the interviewees situated within international experiences of negotiated peace processes were received (i.e. the mechanisms through which these ideas reached the domestic context in Turkey).

In terms of references to other cases, two cases of conflict resolution and negotiated peace processes emerged as prominent: the case of Northern Ireland and the case of South Africa. References to other cases such as the Philippines, Colombia, and the Basque Country, were made at a minimal level. The table below gives the number of references coded for each case through NVivo[10].

Table 1: Number of References to Other Cases and Sources Coded

Cases	Number of references coded	Number of sources coded[11]
Northern Ireland	30	13
South Africa	17	13
The Philippines	6	5
Colombia	2	2
Basque Country	1	1

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[10] NVivo is a software for qualitative research analysis.

[11] Referring to the number of interviewees that made references to the case.

Table 1 shows that out of 34 interviewees, 13 made references to the Northern Irish peace process and 13 to the South African peace process, five interviewees referred to the peace process in the Philippines, two to the Colombian peace process and one interviewee referred to the Basque country. In terms of the number of references coded, most references were made to the Northern Ireland process with a total of 30 references coded. For the South African case, 17 references were coded. The remaining international experiences- the Philippines, Colombia, and the Basque Country were referred to significantly less.

Northern Ireland and South Africa emerged as the two main cases referred to in the discussions on process issues regarding the peace process in Turkey. During the fieldwork research for this study, local actors discussed other cases of conflict resolution minimally. For example, the Colombian peace process was referred to in terms of third-party involvement (of Cuba and Norway) and the Philippines case was discussed in terms of Turkey's third-party role as part of the International Contact Group. Both the Colombian peace talks between the government of Manuel Santos and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the most recent peace process in the Philippines between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) started in 2012 and were still ongoing during the fieldwork of this study.

Other sources such as official reports and the minutes of the meetings of the Commission on the Resolution Process reveal that multiple cases of peace processes and negotiated conflict resolution have been under investigation by various parties and actors in the Resolution Process in Turkey. For example, the official report of the Commission on the Resolution Process (TBMM, 2013) published in November of 2013 and the separate report published by the pro-Kurdish party HDP (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, 2013) in November of 2013 both devoted a section on international experiences including Colombia, the Aceh conflict in Indonesia, and the Basque conflict in Spain among others. Similarly, the meeting minutes of the Commission on the Resolution Process reveal that information sharing from other cases[12] was on the agenda of the commission during its meetings in 2013.

Several possible explanations can be considered with regards to the selection of Northern Ireland and South Africa as primary cases of reference. One point is related to the perception of success of the two cases of negotiation. When asked about their selection of cases, interviewees pointed to their perceptions of success of the negotiations in those cases. As a WPC member and former HDP deputy put it:

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[12] The purpose of the meetings that took place from May to July 2013 was to discuss the Kurdish conflict and possible pathways for the Resolution Process. Each meeting hosted a speech from academics, civil society actors, international practitioners, and victims. Academics and practitioners working on conflict resolution provided comparative accounts of peace processes framing lessons that could be learned from other cases.

Because Northern Ireland is the most successful case and also because it is in Europe it is the case most discussed about but, indeed, it is truly a successful example, it is the most important case to look at while trying to answer the question of how a conflict can be resolved, there is an agreement and also a negotiation process that was initiated by the parties themselves, there are intermediary actors and very well known actors such as Clinton became part of the process. Also, Northern Ireland was the problem of Great Britain, one of the greatest countries in the world. Undoubtedly Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and also South Africa are also important cases but you should consider that the problems of the states or areas that play a critical role in the world system always emerge as crucial problems.[13]

The Northern Ireland and South African peace processes were perceived as successful peace processes despite the fact that in both countries divisions were not overcome and positive peace did not occur. In the case of Northern Ireland, the existence of "peace walls" separating the two communities in Belfast is frequently referenced as the indicator that the peace process has not been successful in promoting reconciliation between the two communities (Bleakley, 2011; Wilson, 2016). Similarly, in the case of South Africa, while widespread conflict did not reoccur, social tension emanating from the legacy of the apartheid continues (Goodman, 2017; Smith, 2012).

Another point that emerged from the interviews on the perception of success is related to a more general standing on Northern Ireland and South Africa as successful cases. In response to the question of why Northern Ireland and South Africa emerged as primary cases of reference, an interviewee professionally active in the area of conflict resolution noted that this is related to the way these cases are promoted as examples to be taken into consideration in the design of peace processes around the world. According to this view, peacebuilding is a business in itself and both individual actors (e.g. Gerry Adams from the Northern Irish peace process and Roelf Meyer from the South African negotiations) and NGOs become active in designing peace processes in collaboration with other NGOs and governments. Furthermore, the interviewee also noted that:

South Africa is still the major reference source for many peace processes in the world; this is the case that Northern Ireland, Colombia, and the Philippines mostly took as a point of reference […] and you should also not forget that those involved in the peace processes in Northern Ireland, Colombia, the Philippines, politicians, NGOs, and academics all provide consultation services to different conflict resolution cases [so this is a market in itself].[14]

This view on the promotion of the South African and Northern Ireland processes as successful cases has also been a point of discussion in previous research. Studies have

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[13] Interview number 22.
[14] Interview number 34.

pointed to the emergence of South Africa as a case of "borrowing" for Northern Ireland and then for other subsequent peace processes (Darby, 2003; Guelke, 2004).

Yet another point that emerged from the interviews is that adopting perspectives from completed processes is viewed as more secure in terms of drawing lessons, compared to ongoing processes. The cases of South Africa and Northern Ireland are accepted as having completed the transition from war to peace (in addition to democracy in the case of South Africa) and these transitions are regarded as being successful from different perspectives. South Africa transitioned to democracy in 1994 and the African National Congress (ANC) has been the ruling party since the initial transition. The Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland was signed in 1998 and established a new constitutional status for Northern Ireland that has remained intact until today. Interviewees discussing lessons to be learnt from these two cases have explicitly and implicitly argued on the idea of "completeness" (i.e. that these two examples of peace negotiation processes have reached an end, independently of whether this end promoted the desirable level of intergroup reconciliation). It should be noted that the idea of "completeness" refers to how the interviewees perceive this idea, rather than referencing an objective argument that the peace processes in Northern Ireland and South Africa have been completed.

This is in direct contrast with the cases of Colombia and the Philippines that were still ongoing during the field research of this study. Colombia became a prominent case internationally with the start of the most recent rounds of peace talks that took place in Havana, Cuba in 2012. As part of the negotiation process, the parties drafted a final peace agreement in 2016 which was put on a plebiscite in November of 2016. The agreement was rejected by a very low margin. However, the plebiscite results did not put an end to the peace talks and an updated version of the agreement was signed between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in November 2016 (International Crisis Group, 2017). The case of the Philippines, on the other hand, attracted attention with the latest part of the negotiations that lasted for 17 years (1997-2014) which was initially conducted without third-party mediation. As a third-party body, the International Contact Group (ICG) was established in 2009 and is composed of four states (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and Japan) and three international NGOs with the purpose of facilitating the talks. The greatest achievement of the process is the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro in March of 2014. The agreement calls for the establishment of a self-governing area in the southern Philippines populated by a majority of Muslims and involves provisions for the decommissioning of weapons by the MILF. Several incidents in 2015 led the peace process to stalemate (International Crisis Group, 2016) but the process is still ongoing as of 2017.

However, other cases of negotiated peace settlements have been successfully completed and implemented since the 1990s. The Chapultepec Peace Accords in El

Salvador signed in 1992 and the Guatemalan peace process (1994-1996) that led to the signing of the Guatemalan Peace Accords in 1996 are two examples of successful peace processes that did not emerge as cases of reference during the interviews. This reveals that the selection of the lessons to be considered for the peace process in Turkey was made haphazardly rather than in a more rational or fully informed way. At the same time, this points to the need to investigate in a deep manner the dynamics of local actors' selectivity in terms of their perspectives derived from other cases of peace negotiations.

Considering these points, in the following parts, I will focus on two main questions: First, in their references to international peacebuilding processes, which issues did the interviewees refer to? Secondly, why did interviewees select Northern Ireland and South Africa as primary cases of reference?

Main Issues

The majority of interviewees adopted ideas about how a peace process should be designed with reference to the international context. Four main themes emerged in terms of peace process design discussed with reference to experiences of peace negotiations elsewhere: continuity/resilience of the peace process, inclusivity, Disarmament-Demobilization-Reintegration (DDR), and transitional justice focusing on the question of amnesties and the formation of a truth and reconciliation commission. As a fifth theme, issues related to political restructuring, including perspectives on power-sharing and constitutional changes, were discussed in respect to internal political dynamics in Turkey with a combination of references to wider international normative perspectives (e.g. human rights and democracy). Below, a discussion for each issue is provided.

These themes were determined after a two-stage coding process through NVivo. First, all points involving references to other cases of peacebuilding were coded under the cases in which they belong. From this process, two main (i.e. Northern Ireland and South Africa) and two secondary (i.e. Colombia and the Philippines) cases were coded. At the second stage, the four main themes mentioned above were identified as recurring in conjunction with the cases. The sixth theme was identified as recurring in the interviews.

- *Continuity of the Negotiations (Resilience)*

During the field research of this study, resilience emerged as an issue in discussions on the continuity of the negotiation process. In a parallel way that the resilience framework has been adopted in peacebuilding referring to the adaptability of social systems to stressors and the risk of conflict, resilience of the peace negotiation process refers to the capacity of the process to bounce back from stressors and risks. The

centrality of the resilience approach in the Turkish context is related to the characteristics of the negotiation process itself. Between 2009 and 2015, the peace process underwent major setbacks and a clear negotiation framework was not set up. Under these conditions, Turkish and Kurdish actors were concerned with maintaining the negotiation framework despite setbacks. As such, they sought to make references to experiences of adaptability in the cases of Northern Ireland and South Africa in terms of how the processes in both countries continued despite major setbacks, including major events of violence.

Multiple interviewees referred to different aspects of the Northern Irish and South African peace negotiation processes by pointing to the importance of being resilient despite risks and uncertainties that might come up during the negotiation process. This revealed the concern with sticking with the peace negotiation framework over other alternatives (such as the continuation of war). Many of the interviewees underlined the importance of being resilient in the peace negotiation process despite interruptions. In the words of an HDP deputy:

> There are two main examples, the South African and the Northern Irish, when you think in abstract and logical terms they both have produced the desired results. The case of Northern Ireland is more similar to the Turkish case because those who seek rights are a minority in terms of numbers, but in South Africa they are the majority. They still have a common ground which is continuity- both processes are the product of almost ten years- and also, despite all negative factors, actors and institutions in both cases remained loyal to the aims and the methodology of the peace process.[15]

The same interviewee further underlined that

> I can say this for the process in South Africa, we were invited there by the DPI[16] we saw that similar processes took place there too, and that we cannot just accept that Oslo was over and so the process is over. There needs to be the continuation of the negotiation process.[17]

This reveals a concern with the idea of continuing the negotiation process despite setbacks. The interviewee supported the pro-Kurdish position by "learning lessons" and creating parallels with how the process of negotiation has unfolded in Northern Ireland and South Africa. In the first excerpt, an effort is discerned to consider the characteristics of the conflict in the process of creating parallels with the Turkish case. The interviewee points to a basic characteristic, referring to minority-majority relations but underlines

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[15] Interview number 31.

[16] The Democratic Progress Institute, a London-based NGP active in the are of conflict resolution. Further details are given in the following sections.

[17] Interview number 31.

that any parallelism regarding the background and characteristics of the conflict is not necessary for adopting perspectives and drawing lessons.

In the same direction, another interviewee, a journalist and member of the WPC, pointed to the issue of continuity by arguing how in the South African case the process of dialogue continued despite major tragic incidents. In his words:

> For example the South African Minister of Defense who was one of the primary actors who was in charge of the meetings [during the peace process] was here and during our conversation with him he said that after a great massacre- I think it was the Soweto massacre18- Mandela interrupted the contacts but we continued the dialogue and did not detach.19

Another interviewee, an academic and member of the WPC, referred to the Colombian peace process that was ongoing at the time of the fieldwork of this study with regards to the continuity of the negotiations. In his words:

> The peace process between the Colombian government and the FARC became stalled six times, the ceasefire was repeatedly broken, but each time they sat again at the table and eventually a peace agreement was signed. I think that this will happen now [for the Turkish case].20

The perspectives above reveal the local actors' effort to support the idea of being resilient despite setbacks that might lead the process to stalemate. Interviewees discussing this perspective generally pointed to the adaptability of the processes at question despite destabilizing events. A parallel perspective is related the duration of the peace process. Regarding the duration of the process, a recurrent theme has been that peace processes last long, and therefore, the sides should not be impatient for reaching an agreement. For example, as an interviewee put it:

> You see in Northern Ireland and South Africa they21 refer to ten years [of peace efforts]; in Northern Ireland they sign an agreement and then for seven years they think about how to implement it, they wait and then they implement.22

This view, expressed by a WPC member, points to the idea that even after signing of an agreement, the implementation of the process might take long. Therefore, parties need to be aware of the need for resilience even in the post-agreement phase.

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[18] Referring to the Soweto uprisings that took place in 1976, 14 years before the formal start of the negotiation process in South Africa to end the apartheid regime.
[19] Interview number 18.
[20] Interview number 5.
[21] Referring to speakers at DPI meetings.
[22] Interview number 16.

Two further issues were discussed in relation to the issue of the continuity of negotiations despite setbacks: the role of third parties in the negotiation process and the question of transparency. Several interviewees noted that third-party involvement is crucial for the continuation of the process at times of deadlock. A WPC member and journalist described the following:

> From time to time these processes enter in deadlock and this is when you need a third eye, for example in Northern Ireland and South Africa when the process stifled, when they were confused on what to do they let a third actor to engage.[23]

Regarding third-party roles, paralleling the general political discourse on the issue, interviewees closer to the military approach (i.e. mainly pro-government actors) discussed the issue of third-party involvement in a way to support the idea for the exclusion of external parties from the process. Actors supporting the rights and recognition approach supported the idea of a third-party in monitoring capacity that would monitor the progress and also put the process back on track during periods of deadlock. Thus, the Kurdish side supported the engagement of third-party actors in the process, by adopting the same aspect of peace process that was rejected by the other side to the negotiations. For example, an HDP deputy argued that:

> We think that a monitoring committee would help the process. It is not that this is our red line. This is the way it has happened in other experiences (of peace processes) in the world. […] Beyond being our red line, this [the monitoring committee] is the red line of peace processes in general.[24]

Another theme related to the issue of continuity of negotiations/resilience is transparency. Interviewees discussed the issue of transparency from different aspects with reference to the experiences of Northern Ireland and South Africa by pointing to instances whereby the question of transparency/secrecy of the negotiations was tied to the continuation of the process. For example, a WPC member referring to the issue of transparency stated the following:

> Tony Blair in his memoirs on resolving the IRA issue says this to his party 'If I can save the life of just one more citizen of Britain I can even negotiate with the devil'- this is how he defended himself when secret talks with the IRA were publicized, because they, too, had secret talks.[25]

From a parallel viewpoint, an AKP[26] deputy and member of the WPC noted that:

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[23] Interview number 18.
[24] Interview number 15.
[25] Interview number 28.
[26] The Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi- AKP) is the governing party in Turkey since 2002 and was one of the primary negotiating parties during the peace process.

> The then minister in charge (in Northern Ireland) told me in a meeting in Istanbul that 'if we had decided to proceed in transparent manner from the beginning [of the negotiations], we would have lost government power. […] The South African minister said the same thing. This is the nature (of a peace process).[27]

In general terms, the question of transparency versus secrecy was discussed in relation to the needs of the peace process. This means that interviewees did not express categorical claims in the form of "processes need to be transparent" or "confidentiality is a must for the success of the process". However, at the same time, those who expressed perspectives on transparency sought to fit their views on the issue by making reference to the international experience.

Overall, Turkish and Kurdish actors pointed to perspectives on the continuity of negotiations despite risks and stressors (i.e. resilience) by adopting perspectives and drawing lessons from the two main cases of Northern Ireland and South Africa in addition to one reference to the Colombian process. The concern with continuity revealed the actors' support for a negotiated settlement over alternative solutions to the conflict such as the continuation of war and military victory. High- and middle-level actors from all sides sought to fit experiences by selectively 'learning' from how negotiations continued despite setbacks and risks.

- *With Whom to Negotiate: The Debate for Inclusivity*

Inclusivity is another major issue that was discussed in the framework of negotiation processes elsewhere. Both Turkish and Kurdish actors discussed inclusivity with reference primarily to the inclusion of different actors in the cases of Northern Ireland and South Africa. The perspectives on inclusivity were closely related to the position of the interviewee. As expected, pro-Kurdish actors supported the inclusion of fighting fractions in the negotiation process by referring to how such inclusivity was realized in other cases.

With regards to the inclusivity debate, Ahmet Turk, a prominent Kurdish politician, made statements in a speech organized by DTP on September 1, 2009 which are indicative:

> In Great Britain, when the Ireland problem came at the country's agenda, the IRA organized the "back of the house" [28]. After meetings with both the government and the IRA, a report was produced, which stated that "if you

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[27] Interview number 16.
[28] In its original: "işin mutfağı".

exclude the IRA from the process, this process cannot continue, it cannot be transformed into peace". Tony Blair said that "if it is to achieve peace, I can even negotiate with the devil". They gave the title of "Lord" to Lord John, the person who achieved peace. In the same manner, Mandela, who is in the memory of every people, was exiled to an island. Mandela wrote letters to the President and the Prime Minister in order to stop the bloodshed. However, the white racist government did not reply to Mandela. But after some time, this person, the representative of the black people, said that "I have to meet as a free person with the representatives of South Africa, my friends" (Hürriyet, 2009).

Ahmet Turk's speech at the early phase of the peace process revealed the effort to promote the idea of inclusivity as a principle that needs to be adopted in the peace process in Turkey. The statement reveals the effort to draw on the experiences of Northern Ireland and South Africa in terms of how actors that were once excluded from the negotiation table were later accepted as interlocutors and became primary parties to the process.

Interviews with Turkish and Kurdish actors point to a similar effort of discussing inclusivity as a principle that needs to be considered in the peace process in Turkey. Indeed, an interviewee who is journalist and member of the WPC used the exact same idea that was discussed by Turk in the excerpt above. In the words of the interviewee: "for example, we see this in the memoirs of Tony Blair, when they criticize him, he says 'if I am going to save the life of even one single English person, I can even negotiate with the devil'"[29]. This quote points to the concern with including the armed fractions in the negotiations in order to achieve success in the negotiation process.

Multiple interviewees made references to different aspects of inclusivity by referring to the Northern Irish peace process. These references included common themes in the inclusivity debate in terms of the actors that should be included in the negotiation process. This involved discussions regarding the inclusion/exclusion of some fractions (e.g. combatant groups) from the negotiation process, and the question of whether and how to include actors outside of the primary parties to the conflict such as the civil society.

One common argument regarding inclusivity is that all major political fractions should be included in the negotiation process with the purpose of securing a more inclusive and henceforth successful process where the concerns of all parties are addressed. For example, a WPC member stated "we see that in the case of Northern Ireland, too, you need to consider other groups, too while you try to solve the problems of one group. Otherwise you might create new problems."[30] This view emerged in several interviews as prominent for the success of the negotiation process. Many interviewees underlined the need for including not only armed group representatives but

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[29] Interview number 28.
[30] Interview number 6.

also all major political fractions in the process so that to achieve a commonly agreed upon framework.

Another common issue that emerged with regards to inclusivity is the inclusion of societal segments beyond the primary decision makers to the process. For example, an HDP[31] deputy expressed this view by stating, "I believe that the Irish example is very important especially in terms of the civil society's inclusion to the process, so the participation of actors such as the Church and sports clubs is important"[32]. From this viewpoint, inclusivity means engaging actors below the formal decision-making level to the process as this will help address the concerns of the society at wide.

Another WPC member and journalist noted that:

> Negotiations are inevitably processes that expand in circles. For example the WPC was the outer circle that was the closest to the society. The first circle was the meetings between the Intelligence Agency and Öcalan. I of course think that this will expand more. As we see that similar processes took place in other countries too, such as Northern Ireland and the Philippines, there is need for (involving) other circles, there need to be concurrent circles.[33]

Another point regarding inclusivity is related to how the negotiating parties themselves approach the notion of inclusivity itself. For example, an AKP deputy pointed to the importance of leaders in adopting the notion of inclusivity as a principle. In his words, "the Irish Prime Minister said this and it is very nicely put, he said that for example 'Ms. Esra, your chair at the table is ready, you may come whenever you want'"[34]. This points to the importance of including all parties to the negotiation table in principle, even if some parties are not willing to negotiate at first place. The argument follows that adopting this principle is essential in establishing the feeling of trust for later phases of the process.

Similar to the resilience debate, inclusivity was also discussed with reference to other experiences with the purpose of supporting specific perspectives over others. Both high and middle-level Turkish and Kurdish actors supported their ideas on the inclusion and/or exclusion of specific groups, such as the armed fractions, with reference to how these processes unfolded in the two primary experiences of Northern Ireland and South Africa.

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[31] The People's Democratic Party (Halkın Demokratik Partisi- HDP) is the main pro-Kurdish party in Turkey. It was founded in 2012 as a continuation of the Peace and Democracy Party (Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi- BDP). The party was one of the primary parties during the peace process.
[32] Interview number 15.
[33] Interview number 9.
[34] Interview number 16.

- *Perspectives on Disarmament-Demobilization-Reintegration (DDR)*

Regarding DDR, one major perspective is to situate the issue of disarmament as a process issue and discuss the importance of its timing vis-à-vis the peace process as a whole. The timing of the DDR has been a controversial issue in the Turkish case due to conflicting expectations from the disarmament process. During the peace process, while government actors prioritized disarmament as a condition for the continuation of the peace talks, pro-Kurdish actors pointed to the need to address democratic and legal guarantees as a precondition for disarmament.

This controversy was reflected in the perspectives expressed by the interviewees. For example, an HDP deputy stated that, "the Irish case is generally given as an example, there, the reason why the process could not begin earlier is that the Major government had posed disarmament as a prerequisite for the process"[35]. The interviewee expressed this view with the purpose of supporting the pro-Kurdish view that disarmament should itself be a point of negotiation and not a precondition for it. This parallels the official approach of the Kurdish side towards the negotiation process.

From a similar perspective, another interviewee, WPC member and human rights activist stated that

> Disarmament is the final stage of a process, not the first one. For example in the case of the IRA, disarmament was completed at the end of 10 years. […] The HDP tried to solve the issue starting from the basis of the problem. This is why it demanded justice first.[36]

The same interviewee further noted the following:

> Of course the process should have as its final aim the disarmament however, we need first to heal the genetic deficiencies of the patient [referring to the Kurdish problem]. […] There is a long road that would lead to final disarmament.[37]

Discussions on DDR are highly embedded with the positions of the actors regarding the conflict in Turkey. Paralleling the views of primary actors in the negotiation process, interviewees that are closer to the military approach to the conflict supported the prioritization of the DDR in the Resolution Process. In the opposite direction, actors closer to the rights and recognition approach supported the view that DDR should come later by making references mainly to the case of Northern Ireland.

From the opposite perspective, an AKP deputy referred to the DDR process in IRA stating that:

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[35] Interview number 22.
[36] Interview number 2.
[37] Interview number 2.

So what was the main issue while the IRA laid down its arms, what was the relationship between the armed groups and the political groups? There are so many positive aspects, why do you [i.e. Kurdish actors] not take these as example? So, the HDP members shall first take these as an example, did the political groups behave as an extension of those holding the arms? They always say 'the state should take example by this and that', the state does not have to take any example, there are certain steps that the state may take.[38]

In terms of the timing of the DDR process vis-à-vis the peace process, a former AKP deputy from Kurdish origin who is a civil society actor active in the area of human rights argued the following:

When we got engaged in the case[39] we saw that the process of laying down the arms takes 10 years and this is the final stage of the process, not the first one, and embedding the arms in concrete is the utmost. So, if you now say that arms will be buried, how are you going to manage the process? If you say that you can manage the process in one day, of course disarmament will be achieved, but this is not possible, both in terms of convincing the society and in terms of realizing political, administrative, and partially economic reforms to solve a problem that dates back to a hundred years.[40]

The last statement reveals the interviewee's critique of the government's position on prioritizing disarmament in the peace process. As these perspectives reveal, actors adopted ideas on DDR from international experiences by fitting them to their own positions on the issue under discussion.

- *Perspectives on Transitional Justice*

Regarding transitional justice, two main issues were considered in terms of how these processes have evolved elsewhere: the issue of amnesty and the issue of the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission. Paralleling the perspectives on DDR, perspectives on transitional justice were also highly confined to the approach of the actors towards the peace process. For example, actors closer to the military approach discussed how Northern Ireland "chose" not to engage with truth-telling processes. On the other hand, actors closer to the rights and recognition approach discussed how the TRC of South Africa is a successful case to examine.

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[38] Interview number 26.

[39] Referring to participating to DPI meetings on the Northern Irish process.

[40] Interview number 1.

In the peace process in Turkey, transitional justice emerged as a primary demand by the pro-Kurdish side to the process. The reason for the prominence of transitional justice and especially of the issue of amnesty and of a truth commission is related to the asymmetric position of the Kurdish side and the position of the Kurdish insurgency. As expected, pro-Kurdish actors demand a transitional justice mechanism that would promote restorative justice beyond retribution and punishment. In the words of an interviewee, an HDP deputy:

> It will be good to have a commission that will have the authority to amnesty, similar to that in South Africa, one that would be authorized to listen to everyone, to have access to all information and in return to have the authority to forgive the wrongdoer.[41]

On the other hand, the Northern Irish case was referred to support the opposite idea of excluding any kind of truth seeking as part of transitional justice. In the words of a journalist and WPC member, "I think it was in [Northern] Ireland, they gave up on this idea. They said 'if we attempt to face [the truth] we will revive all the pain we went through and our wounds will relapse."[42] In the same direction, another journalist and WPC member stated that:

> Of course such [truth] commissions might be established but what I saw in Northern Ireland is that, there were difficulties in terms of evidence and in terms of creating links between perpetrators and evidence, so there were problems as there was lack of clear and just account of the crimes committed.[43]

As a third example, a civil society actor and WPC member explained that:

> We examined the Irish case and there you know the issue of truth was left to the end and currently still the process related to the 2014 agreement is continuing and there are still walls, still neighbourhoods are divided, people have doubts towards each other, and the families of the victims still have problems.[44]

As these interview excerpts reveal, interviewees supported their view on rejecting the idea for a truth commission in the Turkish case by making selective references to the Northern Irish experience.

The case of Northern Ireland emerged as a point of reference also in terms of discussions on amnesty. The transitional justice process in Northern Ireland in terms of

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[41] Interview number 22.
[42] Interview number 18.
[43] Interview number 9.
[44] Interview number 4.

the formula of amnesty that was used was widely discussed as a point of success. As a journalist long active in the area of Kurdish politics put it:

> For example you know the IRA case is the most successful one, there are these famous letters sent to the leaders of the armed group that gave written guarantees to them, this is one of the most striking examples regarding transitional justice.[45]

From a parallel viewpoint, another interviewee, a journalist and member of the WPC stated "you know, in Britain [case of Northern Ireland] they did not consider the intensity of criminal acts, they decided that everyone would be imprisoned for two years."[46] Yet again from a similar perspective, a journalist and WPC member stated: "For example this is what they did in Northern Ireland- amnesty- we absolutely need to have this in Turkey, too, and this needs to involve both the state and the PKK"[47].

Therefore, perspectives on amnesty have sought to situate the Northern Irish example as a successful case to "look at". This was made with the purpose of legitimizing the view that amnesties are needed for overcoming the past.

- *Perspectives on Political Restructuring*

Having considered the ideas and practices on peace process design that were adopted by domestic actors with reference to mainly the experiences of Northern Ireland and South Africa, this section discusses the issues that remained outside of this framework in the interviews. Issues related to constitutional arrangements and issues related to power-sharing, including self-government and decentralization, were discussed widely with reference to domestic conditions in Turkey, the background of the conflict, and the essence of the Kurdish issue. However, at the same time, these issues were also put in the context of global normative frameworks with the purpose of supporting a specific position. This means that rather than references to specific contexts and processes, actors sought to support their positions by referring to universal normative frames such as democracy and human rights.

Perspectives on constitution making were discussed in terms of the conditions in Turkey and the needs of the parties. The majority of the interviewees expressed the view that democratization and constitution making is a wider topic that is not confined to the peace process. A WPC member and academic explained the following:

> For example, we, as professors, said that before initiating constitution-making, there needs to be a facilitating societal and political atmosphere, trust-building

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[45] Interview number 25.
[46] Interview number 28.
[47] Interview number 18.

steps need to be taken, there need to be steps for eradicating societal tensions and political polarization. Only after this we can start forming a new constitution.[48]

Similarly, the issue of self-government is also evaluated within the dynamics of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. An HDP deputy noted that:

> We need to evaluate the issue [of local self-government] not in terms of a partition syndrome but from the perspective of reforming the basis of coexistence- the more the people participate to the political system the more they will internalize it. Each system that impedes participation leads to feelings of exclusion and discrimination and this brings together reaction and conflict.[49]

With regards to power-sharing, and more specifically to territorial power-sharing, several interviewees pointed to how they need to be considered in terms of the contextual conditions in Turkey. From a critical perspective, a journalist argued that:

> There are two issues, first, the nature of the 'self-government' is contested and secondly, the way it is sought to be realized is problematic[50]. The proclamation of self-government as they did it is not compatible with democratic politics, you cannot just proclaim that an area is part of self-government out of nowhere.[51]

Furthermore, issues related to constitution-making and democratic arrangements, including discussions on local governance, have been framed with references to western values and democratic ideals. Pro-government actors have mainly expressed this view. For example, the chief government actor in charge of the Resolution Process from 2012 until 2014 expressed this view:

> There is a trend in the world in general, the transfer of some of the central government's competences to the local, i.e. the encouragement of localization, and this is also one of the central characteristics of western democracies. So, the era when everything was decided by the center is coming to an end.[52]

Similarly, another former AKP deputy and key figure in the Resolution Process expressed this view:

> When we talk about democratic arrangements, we derive diverse meanings from these concepts. What I am trying to say is that actors who represent the

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[48] Interview number 3.

[49] Interview number 15.

[50] Referring to the declarations of self-governance convened to the media first in 2011 by the DTK member Aysel Tuğluk and later in 2015 by the KCK (Kasapoğlu, 2015).

[51] Interview number 25.

[52] Interview number 23.

government refer to the democratization of Turkey within the framework of EU standards and the basic parameters of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, this is not only related to the Kurdish issue. […] In this manner, the AKP's view of the issue is on the basis of humanity, on the basis of international standards, and on ethical basis.[53]

Another interviewee, AKP deputy and later key advisor to the Prime Minister expressed the following view:

Decentralization, local governance, local councils etc. these are the basis of developed societies in the world and also of the 21st century Turkey. So, I perceive the issue not in terms of the 'old way' of understanding it such as federation, self-government, but in terms of re-establishing the relation between the state and the society.[54]

Overall, interviewees sought to discuss issues on political restructuring, including power-sharing mechanisms such as local government, and also constitution-making and democracy, with reference to the internal conditions and also by fitting these issues in the international normative context. Here again local actors made references to normative frameworks with the purpose of fitting their own position, as it is revealed especially by the last two statements by AKP members.

Explaining Case Selection

Having considered which issues the interviewees discussed with reference to other peace negotiation processes, I now discuss the reasons for the selection of the two cases, Northern Ireland and South Africa, as primary cases of reference by Turkish and Kurdish actors.

However, before examining the rationale behind case selection, the following two tables provide the summary of NVivo coding by distinguishing the interviewees as participants and non-participants in meetings organized by a conflict resolution initiative, the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI) Turkey program. This distinction emerged as central during the analysis of the interviews that were conducted for the current research. The DPI and its activities are analyzed in detail in the following sections.

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[53] Interview number 30.
[54] Interview number 21.

Table 2 References to Other Cases by DPI Participants and Non- participants-Thematic[55]

	Continuity of negotiations (resilience)	Inclusivity	Security (DDR_)	Transitional Justice_
Interviewees: DPI = Participant	9	4	2	11
Interviewees: DPI = Non-participant	0	0	1	6

Table 2 shows the number of references made by DPI participants and non-participants in other cases of peace processes with regards to the four main themes that emerged as prominent. As the table shows, references to other peace processes with regards to resilience and inclusivity were only made by DPI participants. Interviewees that did not participate in DPI meetings did not discuss the continuity of the negotiations and the issue of inclusivity with reference to other cases of peace processes. Similarly, DPI participants discussed issues regarding DDR and justice with reference to other peace processes while non-participants did so at a much lesser extent.

Table 3 References to Other Peace Processes- DPI Participants and Non-Participants

	Other cases[56]
Interviewees: DPI = Participant	101
Interviewees: DPI = Non-participant	35

Table 3 shows that DPI participants made three times more references to international experiences and called for looking at how peace processes evolved in other

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[55] This table includes four main themes that emerged in interviewees' discussions on peace processes with reference to other cases. Thus, the fifth theme of "political restructuring" analyzed in the previous section is not included, as, interviewees made references regarding political restructuring by considering more general international normative frames such as democracy and human rights rather than specific peace processes.

[56] The code "other cases" is a parent NVivo node were all references to international peace process experiences were coded. This node includes both specific references in the form "for example, in Northern Ireland […]" and also general references in the form of "we need to look at how such processes evolved in other experiences […]".

parts of the world. This reveals the interest in adopting perspectives on peace process design from elsewhere. Non-participants, on the other hand, were more inclined to discuss issues of peace process design with reference to the specificities of the Turkish context with regards to the background of the conflict and the evolution of societal dynamics in Turkey.

Table 4 References to Other Cases by DPI Participants and Non- participants

	Process Design_[57]	**Colombia**	**N. Ireland**	**Philippines**	**S. Africa**
Interviewees: DPI = Participant	27	2	18	5	8
Interviewees: DPI = Non-participant	2	0	1	1	0

Table 4 shows the number of references to other cases of peace processes with regards to peace process design coded. As the table shows, out of 29 total references to other cases in terms of peace process design, 27 references were made by DPI participants and only two references by non-participants. Based on this finding, it is safe to argue that the DPI provided a platform for participants to get acquainted with other peace processes and draw lessons on different perspectives on the design of peace processes. The table further shows that within DPI participants, most references in terms of peace process design were made to Northern Irish and South African processes.

The selection of the cases was mainly based on information acquired through contact with actors from the cases of reference. Contact with actors from other peace processes and mainly from the Northern Irish and the South African processes was realized through the work of the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI), an NGO active in the area of conflict resolution and democratic progress. Group study visits to Northern Ireland and South Africa and meetings in Turkey formed the basis for the interviewees' understanding of these conflicts and their references to experiences of peacebuilding

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[57] The code "peace process design" here includes general references by interviewees to how processes were designed in the cases of reference, including who were the primary negotiating parties, third-party roles, what topics were addressed and what was their sequence, issues of timing, and the question of secrecy versus transparency in the negotiation process. Security and justice issues are not included under this code.

processes outside Turkey. These study visits and meetings provided the platform for sharing experiences between actors from other processes and actors in the Turkish-Kurdish peace process.

When asked for their opinion on how "lessons" can be considered in the Turkish-Kurdish context, the majority of interviewees underlined that no model can be transferred in its totality from any context considering the uniqueness of each conflict in terms of the historical evolution of the conflict and the dynamics special to each context. A common theme that emerged from the interviews is that other examples can provide "learned experiences" that can be considered as points of reference for other cases. Furthermore, other cases can serve as lessons learnt not only in terms of what proved to be a successful idea and/or practice, but most importantly what proved to be unsuccessful so that "not to make the same mistakes" (multiple interviews). In the words of a DPI coordinator:

> In the world there are different countries that have gone through conflict Resolution Processes, some successful and others unsuccessful, and there are models used in each experience and of course you cannot implement a model from one case to another, this issue is like a fingerprint- none of the models from one case fits another. But each model- especially in terms of the errors- provides knowledge accumulation, we might say that it gives you more tools for your toolbox.[58]

However, the question of which "tools" are selected and out of which experiences remains crucial for understanding the role of local agency in the peacebuilding process. Moreover, the question of why local actors sought to refer to international experiences is also crucial for understanding the dynamics of local agency. The following part provides an overview of the DPI structure and work and discusses the impact of its work on the Turkish context by focusing on the dynamics of expertise and experience sharing in the area of conflict resolution.

The Role of Conflict Resolution Initiatives: The Democratic Progress Institute (DPI) Turkey Program and Conflict Resolution Expertise Sharing

The DPI is a London-based NGO that was established in 2011 by a Turkish conflict resolution and peacebuilding expert who has done previous work on the Kurdish issue with focus on the area of human rights.[59] Since its establishment, the DPI Turkey Program has engaged with dense activities in the form of study visits, meetings, reports

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[58] Interview number 34.
[59] Information on DPI's work structure and activities is derived from http://www.democraticprogress.org/our-focus-areas/ (last accessed 24 October 2017).

and research papers on conflict resolution and peace processes with the participation of high- and middle-level actors from Turkey. *Table 6* shows the number of events (comparative study visits) organized and the number of publications (reports and research papers) produced by the DPI from 2011 to 2017.

Table 5: DPI Turkey Program Events and Publications[60]

Years	Events		Publications	
	Comparative Study Visit	Roundtable	Report	Research Paper
2011	1	1	0	0
2012	1	3	7	13
2013	4	4	6	10
2014	4	5	5	9
2015	3	4	5	13
2016	3	4	7	19
2017	1	6	5	5

As *Table 5* shows, the DPI activities were dense especially in the period from 2012 to 2015 (i.e. during the Resolution Process in Turkey). During this period, the organization was active both in terms of the events organized and in terms of the research papers and reports that were produced regarding different aspects of conflict resolution and peace. The number of events reached its peak in 2014 while publications in terms of reports and research papers where mostly produced in 2016. We can see that the organization's activities in terms of its Turkey program lowered significantly in 2017, paralleling the complete abandonment of the process in domestic politics (having been already stalled since mid-to-late 2015).

Information sharing through the work of the DPI was mainly realized through the study visits and roundtables. The DPI has organized study visits to five countries since

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[60] The table was prepared based on information collected from the official website of the DPI. The number of comparative study visits and roundtables were calculated by the author by considering the meeting reports and the news pieces available on the website.

its establishment in 2011: Northern Ireland, South Africa, Colombia, the Philippines, and Germany.[61] Each study visit lasted several days and encompassed an intensive program including roundtable meetings, seminars, private tours, receptions, and meals with participants from Turkey and from the country of visit. Involving both formal meetings and informal gatherings, the study visits provided the platform for socialization among participants. [62] Furthermore, the study visits have generally been hosted by the government officials of the country. Embassy representatives have also been present.

Each study trip involved 15 to 22 participants from Turkey while the number of participants to roundtables that were organized in different cities in Turkey reached 50[63] at times. Participants from Turkey included both high-level (i.e. party members, deputies) and middle-level (e.g. civil society actors, academics, journalists, and other influentials) actors. Also, participants of the events (especially middle-level actors from the media) shared the perspectives discussed at the events through media outlets and opinion pieces, [64] adding to the knowledge sharing process. This means that the organization's work was shared with a wide number of individuals who were interested in understanding conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes.

Furthermore, experiences of the study trips were also shared with the institutions with whom the participants were affiliated. Especially high-level participants such as party deputies and advisors to the PM shared these perspectives with the parties and related state institutions. The DPI Turkey coordinator noted the following:[65]

> We know that top institutions of the state obtained our reports and they read them because this is how it works. Eventually, each deputy coming from a political party prepares a report to his/her party regarding the trip that he/she participated, so it is not that we just visit a place, observe it, and have some meals there. First of all, each participant has a responsibility and this is not something that we expect but when you go somewhere your party expect this from you and thankfully all participants behaved responsibly and they conveyed very detailed reports to their parties. They also provided copies of these reports to us- these are in our archives- so, these became part of institutional memory.[66]

Therefore, the "learned experiences" from other cases were further disseminated to higher levels with the purpose of sharing insights on peace process design.

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[61] Information on the study visits and summary reports of the meetings are available on DPI's website at http://www.democraticprogress.org/category/publications/reports/ (last accessed 23 October 2017).

[62] This view was expressed by several interviewees and by the DPI Turkey program coordinator.

[63] Most of the reports of study trips and roundtables include the list of the participants to the event. This information is based on the overview of the reports on the website of the organization.

[64] Participants can to share the views discussed in the meetings under Chatham House Rule, i.e. without citing the person who expressed the view.

[65] Interview number 34.

[66] The interviewee informed the author that these reports are not available for public use.

Regarding the organization of the study visits, the DPI Turkey program coordinator noted[67] that the selection of Northern Ireland served practical purposes as the DPI is a London-based institution and therefore most visits were made to Northern Ireland and England. The rest of the visits were limited in number due to logistical concerns and expenses. Trips to South Africa, Colombia, and the Philippines were constrained by the expenses and the larger amount of time needed to organize and coordinate these trips. As a result, both the number of the visits to these countries and the number of actors that participated in the visits were limited compared to the visits to Northern Ireland and the roundtable meetings that took place in Turkey, including Ankara, Istanbul and smaller cities such as Urfa and Van.

Roundtables in Turkey focused on specific issue areas with regards to peace processes, including the role of civil society, the role of the media, and the role of women in conflict resolution. Also, several roundtables on how to "get a process back on track" were organized during 2015, the year when the peace process in Turkey entered the period of stalling.

Both the study trips and the roundtable meetings have been crucial in the sharing of ideas, experiences, and practical matters related to the process of negotiations and peacebuilding. As it is noted in the foreword of the reports:

> We focus on providing expertise and practical frameworks to encourage stronger public debates and involvements in promoting peace and democracy building internationally. […] DPI also aims to support and strengthen collaboration between academics, civil society, and policy-makers through its projects and output. Comparative studies of relevant situations are seen as an effective tool for ensuring that the mistakes of others are not repeated or perpetuated. Therefore, we see comparative models of peace and democracy building to be central to the aim of our achievements and objectives. (Democratic Progress Institute, 2012).

The DPI's working principles are central to understanding the diffusion of ideas and practices in the Turkish case. The organization's work is divided into different focus areas of activity including facilitating collaborative expertise sharing, building capacity through mentoring, and strengthening knowledge through assessment and analysis[68]. These focus areas are crucial with regards to the role of the organization as a platform for experience and expertise sharing. As it is noted on its website, the DPI seeks to achieve collaborative expertise sharing through a model whereby:

> The participants are encouraged to focus their attention on commonalities with other conflicts, rather than their own differences. This unique model helps establish an environment in which potential solutions can be explored with

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[67] Interview with DPI coordinator, number 34.

[68] Information available at http://www.democraticprogress.org/our-focus-areas/ (last accessed 11 September 2018).

conflict transformation experts who have practical experience of relevant subjects, and in which bridges are built between different sides of a conflict. (Democratic Progress Institute, 2018).

The DPI Turkey program coordinator also highlighted this point in a personal communication. The interviewee noted that "our main trade mark is this, we never talk about Turkey [in our meetings]. The best way to think about Turkey is to discuss other cases."[69] This strategy proved crucial in opening up space for discussing issues related to peace process design and peacebuilding in general and moving beyond divisive boundaries among actors that come from different positions and viewpoints on the conflict in Turkey. The interviewee further noted that during study trips and meetings, participants were asked not to express their opinions on the Turkish case and to discuss, communicate, and ask about the case/process that was under investigation at those particular meetings.

The DPI activities aimed both the Track 1.5 and the Track 2 levels with the purpose of engaging both the high and middle level actors and institutions in conflict resolution perspectives and provide advice. As it is noted on the website, the DPI seeks to build capacity through mentoring by: "carrying out private diplomacy activities, providing targeted advice and by creating safe spaces for key actors and institutions to engage in learning opportunities relating to conflict transformation, including governance issues and human rights" (Democratic Progress Institute, 2018).

The organization became the meeting point for middle and high-level actors from all political sides in Turkey, including the AKP, the CHP, and the HDP. The MHP political actors, while being invited to the meetings and activities organized by DPI, have never participated. In the words of an interviewee who is responsible for the work of the DPI in Turkey:

> We used to call persons with strong disagreements on purpose, because we have this principle, to talk on the issue with people who are most far to the issue, those who would not speak to each other on other occasions, in order to break down the prejudices if possible, and more importantly, to get them into dialogue with each other with the expectation that communication would help break prejudices by itself. [70]

In general terms, the organization seeks to promote potential solutions that would involve the main stakeholders and also the public at wide. As it is noted on its website, the organization seeks to: "strengthen knowledge through assessment and analysis of the complex dynamics at work in the conflict and share potential solutions with stakeholders

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[69] Interview number 34.
[70] Interview with DPI coordinator, number 34.

and the broader public with the aim that it will contribute to a long-lasting political resolution to conflict" (Democratic Progress Institute, 2018).

The DPI's work is supported by a Council of Experts composed of experts from Turkey and other countries. The Council of Experts includes academics, journalists, independent experts, NGO leaders, and professionals. Regarding the profile of the experts, out of thirteen experts from Turkey, six have been members of the Wise People Commission that was formed in April of 2013. Other WPC members regularly attended and contributed to roundtables and study visits in Turkey and abroad. Foreign experts include some well-known conflict resolution practitioners such as Jonathan Powell who was British Government's chief negotiator on Northern Ireland from 1997 to 2007, and Roelf Meyer who was the South African government's chief negotiator in constitutional negotiations in 1993.

The profile of the DPI's Council of Experts reveals the importance devoted to professional experience as a source of expertise. Beyond Jonathan Powell and Roelf Meyer, foreign experts supporting the activities of the organization include former politicians and diplomats including Bertie Ahern, the former Prime Minister of Northern Ireland; Dermot Ahern, former government minister of the Northern Irish Parliament; and other former EU and British diplomats. This structure is crucial for the expertise and experience sharing process that emerged as prominent in the interview research of this study. Furthermore, this structure is crucial as it reveals the importance devoted to expertise of a certain kind, referring to expertise derived from persons of authority, mainly professionals and practitioners of a certain kind (i.e. professionals coming from Western countries).

As Leander and Weaver note, "professional experience is often considered as valuable as science, if not more" (Leander & Weaver, 2018, p. 3). The centrality of professional experience in conflict resolution derives from the status of the discipline as both a research/ journal-based and as a practice-based discipline, what Autesserre (2014) refers to as "thematic" versus "local knowledge" in externally-led peacebuilding. Autesserre (2014) points how in externally-led top-down designed peace processes professionalism in terms of "foreign peacebuilders" is valued over local knowledge. As Autesserre notes, "today, the most valued expertise is that of foreign interveners who are trained in peacebuilding techniques and who have extensive experience in a variety of conflict zones" (2017, p. 125). In the context of the DPI, expertise based on practical knowledge of "professionals" emerged as crucial for "lesson-learning" processes. On this issue, Autesserre further notes:

> International peacebuilders can provide local stakeholders with an understanding of how individuals in other countries at other times have responded to similar situations. Expatriates with thematic expertise can also contribute different perspectives on the situation and help insiders gain critical distance while analyzing problems and developing solutions. (Autesserre, 2014, p. 71).

A similar process of expertise-sharing in the form of promoting perspectives on how political actors in other countries have responded to similar situations was realized through the work of DPI's Turkey Program. Main difference is that this expertise- sharing was not realized as part of top-down design but through a platform that its aim was the practice of 'sharing' at first place. At the same time, the structure of the platform (i.e. directed towards the sharing of experiences of "others" without involving perspectives on the Turkish case) offered the space for local agency to express itself. Turkish and Kurdish actors were able to selectively "learn" from other experiences, by adopting specific perspectives while rejecting others. In this process, they valued information provided by persons of "authority" and they made use of their expertise.

The DPI's focus on the provision of expertise sharing through meetings as an instrument for promoting conflict resolution perspectives is crucial for understanding the selective use of international perspectives by Turkish and Kurdish actors. Personal contact emerged as a crucial factor in the expertise and experience sharing from other cases. Many interviewees mentioned personal communication with actors from other cases while discussing a specific issue or process within the peacebuilding process. For example, a former AKP deputy stated that:

> The then minister in charge (in Northern Ireland) told me in a meeting in Istanbul that 'if we had decided to proceed in transparent manner from the beginning [of the negotiations], we would have lost government power. […] The South African minister said the same thing. This is the nature [of a peace process].[71]

Several other quotes also reveal Turkish and Kurdish actors' valuing of personal contact in the process of lesson learning. For example, a WPC member and former advisor to the PM stated that:

> I asked this issue to Mitchell -he was the negotiator in Northern Ireland- in a personal discussion with him "would you be able to be the negotiator if you weren't an American?" and he said "no" but he also said that- let's suppose that there were five persons from each side [to the negotiation] at the table, he said that they were never able to have all ten people together but they still continued the negotiation with six or eight people. So, the negotiator is crucial for the continuation of the negotiation process.[72]

Similarly, another WPC member and journalist noted that: "the South African Minister of Defense was here [in Istanbul] and he said: 'during a massacre- the Soweto

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[71] Interview number 16.
[72] Interview number 11.

massacre, I think- Mandela interrupted the contacts but we continued the dialogue and did not detach'"[73].

While referring to different process issues related to peacebuilding, these quotations reveal the importance of personal contact as a mechanism of idea diffusion. In this context, personal contact emerged as crucial because a first-hand view of a peace negotiation process was shared among actors. This first-hand experience-sharing and expertise derived from professional experience proved crucial for Turkish and Kurdish actors' selective adoption of perspectives from the Northern Irish and South African peace processes.

Another quote by an HDP deputy support this point on personal contact as crucial in experience and expertise sharing:

> Jonathan Powell was the key advisor to Tony Blair during the negotiations with IRA, in our meetings with him he said 'when you look at other cases and for example when you examine our case, focus on our mistakes rather than on our successes'- I think this is very important.[74]

The quotations above reveal that thematic conflict resolution expertise drawn from its own context (e.g. Mitchell and Powell on Northern Ireland and Meyer on South Africa) had a crucial impact in the selective "learning" of Turkish and Kurdish local actors in Turkey. High- and middle-level actors selectively adopted perspectives and ideas by drawing on knowledge disseminated by persons of "authority". Therefore, local actors in Turkey selectively "chose" but this process of choosing and learning took place in the contextual conditions available (i.e. within the structure provided by the DPI).

So, where does this leave us with regards to norm diffusion and local agency? What is the impact of expertise sharing? What is the relation between power and expertise? To what extent local actors can express their agency in their selection of perspectives on peace process design?

Leander and Weaver define conflict resolution expertise as "authoritative knowledge related to specific conflict, and experts are those who/ that which communicate this knowledge" (2018, p. 2). The authors further maintain that:

> Science is not designated as expertise- it is science. It becomes expertise when it is made authoritative in relation to a problem. The 'expert' is the person/object making the link who/that communicates, presents, packages and conveys relevant knowledge (that is, produces 'expertise') to others who don't have the same conditions of knowing. (Leander & Weaver, 2018, p. 2)

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[73] Interview number 18.
[74] Interview number 22.

Turkish and Kurdish actors' references to knowledge acquired through contact with professionals and influential actors from the Northern Irish and South African processes reveals that the process of experience sharing from "persons of authority" had a crucial impact on their understanding of peace process design. Turkish and Kurdish actors did not have the same conditions of knowing, as they had never been part of a "successful" process for negotiated solution to a conflict. They sought to learn from persons of "authority" whose insights they perceived as crucial in terms of designing a peace process. The profile of those persons thus emerged as crucial. The structure of the meetings had also an impact on the selective adoption of insights. The purpose of the meetings was not to discuss the Turkish case but rather to learn and make sense of other experiences with negotiated settlements. Turkish and Kurdish actors who participated in the meetings were constrained but also empowered by the structure of the meetings. They were constrained because of the inevitably "limited" structure of experts and cases under investigation. At the same time, they were empowered because they were encouraged to move beyond their domestic political positions by discussing processes outside of Turkey.

At the same time, expertise is bound up with mechanisms of power as it creates hierarchies of superiority and inferiority between experts and non-experts (Barnett, 2012, p. 509). From this point, the profile of "experts" is also crucial. The DPI's Council of Experts is composed of primarily Europe-based experts, including primarily experts from the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland in addition to other European countries such as Switzerland and Belgium. Among the foreign experts, only one is from Sri Lanka while a second "non-European" expert is from California, USA. At the same time, the group includes policy experts working with international organizations have experience in countries around the world including Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. Therefore, the profile of the "experts" point to a combination of thematic and "local knowledge" expertise in Autesserre's (2014) terms with the difference that this knowledge was not "imposed" but rather "shared".

Thus, the sharing of expertise and experiences points to a "horizontal" diffusion process in the Turkish case. Turkish and Kurdish actors who participated to meetings "learned" from other actors in the absence of imposition of peace process design.

Conclusion

Turkey's resolution/peace process signalled a turning point for addressing the Kurdish conflict. While the process stalled in mid-2015, it remains crucial as it was the first instance when the decades-long conflict was addressed through political terms. The peace process is also crucial as it allowed for the expression of different expectations from peace. During the process high- and middle-level actors frequently voices their expectations on how the peace process should be designed and proceed.

This paper provided findings from a larger project on the politics of the local in peace processes with the purpose of investigating the use of international norms of peacebuilding in the domestic context in Turkey. The findings pointed to Turkish and Kurdish local actors' selective adoption of international norms and practices with the purpose of supporting their own perspectives on peace process design. The findings reached in this research also pointed to the importance of conflict resolution initiatives in forming a platform for experience-sharing and "lesson-learning" among participants. In the Turkish case, the Democratic Progress Institute's Turkey Program provided such a platform to Turkish and Kurdish high- and (primarily) middle-level actors in the peace process in Turkey.

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