Private Rivers

Dr. Mine Islar,
Centre of Sustainability Studies
LUCID& LUCSUS

Water Lecture
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Overview

- Drivers of politics of renewable energy in Turkey
- Privatization for hydropower
- Run-of-river hydro facts
- Data collection strategy
- Findings
- Clarification and conclusion
Politics of renewable energy in Turkey

1- Water flows for nothing, there is an energy crisis!
   Large-scale effort to promote small scale hydroelectricity facilities: 49 years.

2- Blue Energy for a greener Europe
   Climate change mitigation.
   Global funds.
   Government incentives

3- Run-of-river hydro
   Small scale hydropower is promoted as environmentally friendly.
   Approx. 2,000 projects are licensed.
Map of hydropower projects 2001-2023

Hydropower plants
- In operation
- In the process

Important nature reserves

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Private rivers in Turkey?

- Privatization of water use rights made possible after the legal reforms in 2001.

- Facilitated by climate technology funds and other loans, run-of-river hydropower investments spreaded widely.

- Private sector became the major actor controlling the water resources of the river basins.
Run-of-river (small hydro)

- "Goes with the flow".
- Considered as environmental friendly.
- 10MW or more?
Data collection strategy

- Choosing critical samples.
- In-depth interviews: 52
- Focus groups
- Participatory observations
## Profile of interviewees

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<th>Intervieewee profile</th>
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<td>State officials (MoEU, DSI, EIA dep.)</td>
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<td>Local politicians and businessman</td>
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<td>Village women</td>
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FINDINGS

I. State-society relations

*The State sold us for 49 years.*
*Inhabitant of Aksu Valley.*

- New alliances between state and business, opaque form of governance.
- Rural communities are marginalized via/from discursive and political spaces.
- Participatory exclusion in consultation meetings
II. Water and land rights

- Changes in renewable energy laws.

- Urgent expropriation.

- Water rights guaranteed 49 years for hydrobusiness but remain ambiguous for other water uses.
III. Environment

- Deforestation
- Changes in water quality
- Blocking of fish migration
- Threat to endangered species (like salmon).
- Wildlife disturbed due to construction and gridlines.
- HEPP:s are considered as threats to biodiversity hotspots in Turkey by Conservation International
IV. Rural identities

- Divided families
- Inequalities of social and material power: who benefits from new opportunities?
- Women’s major role in social struggles.
Rise of water struggles

- 2009: Village groups start their struggles.
- 2010: Turkish Water Assembly is established.
- 2011: The Great March of Anatolia.
- 2009-2013: On-going legal struggles between companies and villagers.
Struggles for recognition

“Where is justice? Where is my right as a citizen? Aren’t we counted as citizens by the state?”
Conclusion

- Renewable energy vs. rights to water. Privatization of water use has implications on: legitimacy, responsibility and transparency.

- Developmental state vs. rural lifestyles and nature.

- Struggles over Turkish rivers do not only reflect the conflicting interests of stakeholders but also a struggle of recognition for rural lifestyles.
Clarifications

- The focus is mostly on initial stages of hydropower projects

- I seek to critically discuss the discrepancy between what these projects claim they do and what they actually do.

- This does not necessarily imply a dismissal of renewable energy development as a means to produce sustainable energy and improve livelihoods of people.
Extra info: resistance

- Various occupations and struggles at construction sites.
Assume that the Environmental protection authority in Turkey notifies an industrial plant that it is polluting a river beyond the legally permitted levels. Which of the following outcomes is most likely? Choose one single answer:

The company complies with the law (either voluntarily or through court orders, fines, and other sanctions) 38%
The company bribes or influences the authorities to ignore the violation 46%
Absolutely nothing happens 16%

http://data.worldjusticeproject.org/#index/TUR
Recommended literature