

Turkey's Map of Environmental Injustices is now online!

Posted by Sonia Goicoechea on December 9th, 2013



By **Begum Ozkaynak** and **BOG** – [Bogazici University](#) - EJOLT team

“The Map of Environmental Injustices in Turkey” that we have been engaged in as EJOLT-Turkey, with the Political Ecology Working Group in Istanbul, went online at www.direncevre.org (in Turkish) on October 19, 2013.

While still in its preliminary stages and incomplete, it incorporates some 100 well-known environmental resistance movements as reported by local activists and scholars. The good news is, just after its launch, both the map and its website have generated many likes on Facebook and legions of twitter followers, and also received substantial nationwide media coverage (see the list below with links).

While many of the reported cases in the map focus on water conflicts (e.g. access to water, dam construction, wetlands), several are about mining activities, industrial activities and mega-infrastructure projects, and others address energy production (e.g. coal, nuclear). It is hoped that the compilation and analysis of these cases, coupled with simultaneous exploration of the change in material and energy flows in Turkey, will provide a basic yet arguably very important step toward informing national public debate on the structure of growth and the distribution of risks, benefits and costs within the development and environment nexus.

The map, with an activist spirit, aims to link both local movements in Turkey with each other and with the overarching national movement as well. The website offers its members an interactive platform to share information about available cases (where out of 100 cases, half are fully reported) and make new entries. After our launch, we had some twenty cases entered directly through crowd-sourcing.

Without a doubt, having the map in the right place at the right time was important! The fact that Turkey's environmental movement was busy with protests throughout 2012—which resulted in two amazing success stories—helped us spread the map easily and quickly. During the Gezi Park protests that erupted across Turkey in June to oppose plans to replace the only green space left in Taksim with a shopping mall and/or a luxury hotel under the rubric of rebuilding the Ottoman Military Barracks (www.ejolt.org/section/blog/), which eventually led to the suspension of the construction project, the map was displayed at the park throughout the demonstrations. Recently, a massive coal-burning power plant project on Turkey's Black Sea coast, in Gerze, Sinop was also suspended thanks to community resistance—and this case had already been featured on the map as an entry point. Overall, the collective spirit and joint action of the environmental movement in Turkey confirmed what environmental resistance can achieve, and gave much needed hope to hundreds of other environmental movements on this map.

Then, on 26-27th October, 2013, we presented the map at the Pharaonic Projects Conference organized by the Green Institute Greece and Green Thought Association Turkey in Istanbul. As conflicts related to huge infrastructure projects is one of the most important items on Turkey's agenda, the map set up a platform for discussion by showing that Turkey might well be the champion in the league of "Unnecessary Imposed Mega Projects". Entries we had on the map included large-scale hydropower projects such as the Ilisu Dam, the third bridge over the Bosphorus Strait (which will destroy Istanbul's last remaining forests), a third airport in Istanbul (supposed to become the world's largest airport), two nuclear power plant projects (in Akkuyu and in Sinop), and a huge canal to connect the Black and Marmara Seas. The presentation underlined hopes that the map would make environmental justice struggles in Turkey more visible, and help activists build networks, share know-how, and access relevant scientific research that is supportive of their arguments.

Now that you have read about the EJOLT Turkey team's mapping exercise, imagine the impact that the global map of environmental injustices to be launched early next year will have!

Internet media:

- [Baska Haber](#) (5 June, 2013)
- Şafak Pavey's (Parliament Member of Turkey) official web site, [public speech](#) (5 June, 2013)
- [Yeşil Gazete](#) , by Ali Kerem Saysel (12 June, 2013)
- [Vagus TV](#) (22 November, 2013)
- [Bianet](#) (28 November, 2013)

Radio programs:

- [Acik Radyo](#) , (5 June, 2013)
- [Acik Radyo](#) , Metropolitika (23 October, 2013)
- [Yesilin Asli](#) (28 November, 2013)

TV programs:

- [Sosyal Kafa](#) , online TV program (22 October, 2013)
- [The storify version of this program](#) (24 October, 2013)

<http://www.ejolt.org/2013/12/turkeys-map-of-environmental-injustices-is-now-online/>

