Abstract submitted by Agit Özdemir and Günen Yalnıç on behalf of the Mesopotamian Ecology Movement

Title:

Constituent actors in the democratization of cities in North Kurdistan

Abstract:

The Kurdish Freedom Movement (KFM) has achieved an increasing success in the local elections since 1999. End of 90'is the theoretical base of a "free municipalism" has been laid and in this sense steps have been taken to set up people's assemblies at neighborhood level, women and youth councils and city councils. In 2010 the 1st "Conference on Ecology and Local Authorities" has been realized. A framework was released which stated that municipalities organize the society based on the four pillars "organized society and participative approach", "ecological life", "gender liberated approach" and "participative social economy".

One of the political actors of the democratization of cities is the Democratic Society Congress (KCD) which as an umbrella of KFM structures is a platform with a new approach of doing politics for the society. At the same time the KCD is an alternative to parliamentarian democracy which is in a structural crisis. With other words it is the "council of councils" and founded and founding within democratic autonomy.

The neighborhood people's assemblies have been founded as one of the first crucial steps of democratic autonomy in 2005 and concurrently they are elementary to develop democratic autonomy. In 2015, before the harsh ongoing state repression, in more than half of urban neighborhoods of North Kurdistan people's assemblies have been founded. People's assemblies have to be considered as the main self power especially considering the existing representative political structures which are not able to develop solutions for political as well as social-local needs and requests.

The constituent actors have a problem not to establish a balance theory and practice. One of the main problems in the practice is the upcoming hierarchy. While one the one side a participative democracy and a horizontal and decentralistic social life is aimed and developed, one the other side hierarchical and centrist relations between the constituent actors continue to exist in a hidden way.

The interventions of the nation-state against the constituent actors has led to an instability. In 2009 massive arrestations against activists started until 2012 as so called KCK operations, interrupted the building up of participative structures and brought numerous organizations to existential problems. Today the arrestations and repressions exceed by far that years. Nowadays also municipalites have been usurped by the Turkish government and the war affected many cities in a very direct way.

This article will investigate the constituent actors in the process of democratization of cities in North Kurdistan and developing of free citizenship. Theoretical as well as practical works will be discussed. The challenges and opportunities will be treated from a critical point of view.