

**Social Representations Approach to a Peace Process: The Case of Turkey**

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## **Abstract**

This doctoral dissertation describes a longitudinal research project seeking to contribute to our understanding the role of meaning-making processes in creating or obstructing societal and political transformations towards peace. The focus of the project is on the plurality and dynamicity of social knowledge in peace processes, thus I draw on the social representations theory, a constructivist approach to social knowledge. I investigated the case of the peace/resolution process regarding the Kurdish question in Turkey through three empirical studies using media data. First, various constructions of the concept of peace, their discursive function, and change in the constructions as the peace/resolution process continued are investigated by using corpus linguistic methods in the corpora of five newspapers for two-years period. Later, various representations of the peace/resolution process, their underlying cultural and ideological resources as well as their action orientations are scrutinized by performing critical discourse analysis. Lastly, various understandings of the peace process and communication strategies in dealing with other understandings are investigated by conducting qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis on readers' comments to an online newspaper. Through these studies, I investigate the historical, cultural, and political factors that influence constructions of different understandings of peace. I look at how these various subjective understandings exist together, how they deal with each other and how they orient people to treat others' understandings. I also identify how the various understandings change as a result of interactions with each other and adapt to changing physical realities. Lastly, I interpret how these various understandings constitute social context that promote or impede social change towards peace. By doing so, I address the reciprocal and simultaneous influence between society members and social and political context through plurality and dynamics of social knowledge. I argue that focus on these relations provide a conceptual framework to address the complexity of move towards peace.

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (2019) has reported a total of 372 conflicts worldwide, among which more than 57 per cent, 213, are violent. The number of intrastate conflict relations, 245, is almost double the number of interstate conflict relations, 127 (HIIK, 2019). The prevalence of violence makes the achievement and maintenance of peace an essential and urgent issue. However, common-sense understanding of peace as the absence of violence does not help to create lasting peace as the Global Peace Index (2019) presents positive peace – the existence of social justice and the absence of structural inequality – as a strong indicator of future peacefulness. Hence, achieving and maintaining peace is a complex process that involves the transformation of social relations and political structures – in other words, moving from a culture of conflict to a culture of peace.

Moving towards peace has been the focus of various disciplines from international relations and political science to social psychology and education. Various concepts are derived to address the complex process of moving towards peace, such as peace-making, peace-building, conflict resolution and reconciliation. The reason for these varieties lies in the complexity of moving towards peace, and it is plausible to argue that multidisciplinary and multilevel approaches can provide a better understanding of moving towards peace. In this thesis, I try to adhere to a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the peace/resolution process regarding the Kurdish question in Turkey. My approach is informed by various social science



disciplines, such as political science, media studies and discourse studies, although it mostly draws upon the literature of social psychology, political psychology, and peace psychology. Moving towards peace consists of various institutional and social transformations in societies. It takes place at various levels in society simultaneously and/or consecutively without linear progress, and the transformations, their acceptance and practice at these various levels in a society influence each other, as changes at one level may facilitate or obstruct changes at other levels (Bar-Tal, 2009; Lederach, 2003). Moving towards peace can be treated as a specific case of social change. Although it is well known that social and political structures and institutional systems and society members influence each other in creating social change, how this bidirectional relationship takes place and can be understood through social psychological constructs has not been connected to the processes of moving toward peace. Drawing upon the social representations theory and methodological insights of discourse studies in this thesis, I focus on the plural and dynamic nature of socially constructed knowledge and its socially constitutive power. As different social groups construct different understandings of the same phenomenon regarding their own experiences, values and practices, they also interact with others' understandings. Existing social systems guide them to treat others' understandings in particular ways. However, the same process operates for other groups as well. They may challenge the way other groups treat themselves and their understandings are treated in the social and political context. Hence, diversity of social understandings, how they interact with each other in symbolic or physical encounters, and how they change or adapt to situations in turn illustrate a social psychological move towards peace.

In this chapter, after a brief introduction of peace and conflict constructs and perspectives in social psychology, I explain the social representations theory and its contributions to the study of moving towards peace. I develop research questions that are relevant to the case of the peace/resolution process in Turkey. Then I explain how I collect and organize the data

consisting of online newspaper articles from five ideologically different newspapers in Turkey and readers' comments on a news article regarding the peace/resolution process. Later, I provide brief descriptions of the analyses I used in the empirical studies. I conclude this chapter with information about the background of the case study, the Kurdish question in Turkey, its past and present as well as the peace/resolution process.

In the second chapter, I draw upon Gavriely-Nuri (2010) and Gibson's (2011) proposal to investigate social and political constructions of peace in order to understand what particular purposes they serve in the immediate contexts in which they are formed. I take it forward to address how constructions of peace change or remain the same as they encounter a variety of constructions as well as changes in physical realities. In order to do that, I use corpus linguistics methods and network analysis in the analysis of 610 news articles from different phases of the peace/resolution process.

In the third chapter, I aim to illustrate meaning-making processes in the peace/resolution process. To this end, I investigate how different representations draw on various identity constructions, cultural and institutional resources, and argumentation strategies as well as how social context is constructed and representations of others are treated with a critical discourse analysis of 34 news articles from five different newspapers.

In the fourth chapter, I draw on various communication processes of dealing with others, which emphasize mutual recognition and perspective-taking (Jovchelovitch, 2007; Kislioglu, 2017; Sammut & Gaskell, 2010). I aim to identify communication strategies used in treating others' representations that facilitate or impede mutual recognition and perspective-taking. In order to identify communication strategies, I analyse 138 online readers' comments on a news article about the peace/resolution process.

In the last chapter, I conclude with a general overview and evaluation of the studies, highlighting their contributions and limitations. I discuss their potential implications and suggestions for future research.

## *Conflict and peace in social psychology*

Conflicts are a natural part of human relationships. They can function to alert individuals and communities about underlying tensions, thus they can provide a pathway to challenge oppressive systems and create desired social change (Kriesberg & Dayton, 2012). Intergroup conflicts are based on differences between groups in terms of social power, access to resources, important values, beliefs or other significant disagreements (Fisher, 2006). In addition to encounters between groups of people, intergroup conflicts can be seen as encounters between states, governments and their armies, which are more than social groups (Gibson & Condor, 2009). Intergroup conflicts take place at various levels, including not only structural and societal levels but also interpersonal levels; conflict at any level usually spreads to other levels. In other words, discussions and negotiations among politicians and changing physical realities always interact with meaning-making processes of the public and vice versa. Therefore, the transformation of intergroup conflicts requires addressing these levels and their interaction together (Bar-Tal, 2009; Lederach, 2003). Although there is an increasing need to include societal, political, historical and cultural conditions in the analysis of social-psychological aspects of conflict and peace (Cohrs, Vollhardt, & McKeown, 2018), the structural levels and their bidirectional relations with individual factors have been rarely addressed (Vollhardt & Bilali, 2008). What follows below are brief explanations of intergroup conflict and peace studies in social psychology from a variety of epistemological perspectives that explicate these aspects.

In the study of conflict and peace, the focus of social psychology is mostly oriented toward individual factors and group dynamics (Fisher, 2006). Various perceptual, cognitive, emotional and behavioural mechanisms at both the individual and group levels are found to result in prejudice, discrimination and conflict escalation as well as resistance to resolution (see Fisher, 2006 for a review). Group-level factors influencing conflict are also studied in

terms of identity, conformity pressures, group norms, social influence, decision-making and the role of leadership (Fisher, 2006). Similarly, meaning-making processes of the move from violent conflict toward peace are mostly investigated in terms of the social-psychological factors that facilitate or obstruct peace-making. For instance, promoting empathy and perspective-taking as well as critical in-group evaluation are found to be among the social-psychological factors that facilitate conflict resolution and the promotion of peace when psychological needs for identity, security and safety are met (Leidner, Tropp, & Lickel, 2013). Moreover, Bar-Tal and Halperin (2013) state that various values, circumstantial beliefs about the relations with rival groups as well as selective, biased and distorted information processing are social psychological barriers to peace-making. While this focus on social-psychological aspects of interpersonal and intergroup relations provides insights regarding improving social relations, it highlights individual characteristics as reasons for, and solutions to, social problems rather than taking into account compelling influences of political systems and structures on social relations.

In addition to the social-psychological aspects of conflict and peace, economic, cultural, historical, political and societal structures influence expressions and transformation of intergroup conflicts (Christie, 2006; Fisher, 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Although social-psychological and macro-level aspects are complementary in understanding conflict and peace, Fisher (2006) concedes that the macro-level areas are not as well explored as they should be. However, one of the earliest approaches to intergroup conflict was based on the contextual social processes but investigated it in a manipulated case of an experiment. The realistic conflict theory explicates that conflicting group interests in obtaining scarce resources leads to competition, while interdependent superordinate goals promote cooperation (Sherif & Sherif, 1969). Although it is found that the conflicts of group interests increase attachment to the in-group (Sherif & Sherif, 1969), the development of in-group identification

or its possible effects upon behaviour in intergroup contexts have not been focused upon in the elaborations of the realistic conflict theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Although social-psychological competition and realistic competition over scarce resources are characterized as distinct concepts, they are inextricably linked in real life. Tajfel and Turner (1979) explain a form of this relation, which is that socially shared belief systems about the nature and structure of the relations between social groups in a society shape social actions (known as intergroup theory). These actions can be a collective action aimed at creating social change or at maintaining the status quo. Or they can appear in the form of individual action aimed at upwards social mobility when society is assumed to be flexible and permeable. Thus, Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that the processes of social categorization, self-evaluation through social identity and intergroup social comparison can be integrated into the explanations of social conflict and social change.

In a deconstruction of Tajfel and Turner's intergroup theory, Michael (1990) argues that the theory is process oriented and the content of categories and identities has not been related to how intergroup comparison, competition and cooperation are conducted. Michael (1990) further explicates that the content of the identities unfolds the way they are historically and socially conditioned, thus it is necessary to investigate a variety of content-process patterns in order to better understand a social phenomenon.

Similarly, Bar-Tal (2000) develops a framework of societal beliefs to explain the socio-psychological condition of societies in times of conflict. This framework, known as the 'ethos of conflict', describes societal beliefs about conflict situations. According to this framework, societal beliefs about the justness of own goals, security, positive collective self-image, own victimization, patriotism, unity, delegitimizing opponents and peace are enduring beliefs shared by society members and characterize the societies in conflict (Bar-Tal, 2000). They help societies to adapt to a conflict situation and cope with the stress as they facilitate

communication among society members (Bar-Tal, 2009). They also justify the use of violence and mobilize support and action in order to maintain the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2009).

Cohrs, Uluğ, Stahel, and Kışlıoğlu (2015) argue that the concept of the ethos of conflict mostly captures the dominant perspectives and does not elaborate on the multiplicity of viewpoints and alternative perspectives that exist in societies. There are different perspectives on a conflict due to the different positions of individuals and groups rather than one true interpretation of the conflict (Cohrs et al., 2018). For instance, movement towards peace creates approach and avoidance tendencies both at the societal level and personal level in societies (Kelman, 2007).

The approaches explained above illustrate the common perspectives in the social-psychological study of intergroup conflicts. Although the interest in individual factors related to conflict is more common, the intergroup theory and the ethos of conflict attend to the relation between the meaning-making processes of society members and social structures. However, the diversity of viewpoints and the contents of identities need to be addressed in order to better understand the complexity of conflict, including not only various psychological- and societal-level factors but also their interplay. Before suggesting ways for handling conflicts constructively, a comprehensive understanding of an intergroup conflict at the level of interaction of the various aspects, causes, actors involved and contextual characteristics of a particular setting is required to identify barriers to, and opportunities for, the resolution of the conflict (Cohrs et al., 2018; Fisher, 2006).

Various approaches have been developed to deal with conflicts constructively. Conflict resolution is an approach that seeks solutions with regard to the needs of both sides for identity, recognition, security and justice through active engagement in joint problem-solving in order to establish a new relationship between the parties involved in the conflict (Kelman, 2010). However, after realizing the term ‘conflict resolution’ might mean “an attempt to get

rid of conflict through which people are raising important and legitimate issues” (p. 3) in his experience in Central America, Lederach (2003) suggests using the term ‘conflict transformation’. Since the term ‘conflict transformation’ also indicates that conflict is normal in human relationships, transformation is aimed at creating constructive change processes through conflict. Lederach (2003) describes conflict transformation as “to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, and increase justice in direct interaction and social structures” (p. 14). Conflict transformation is a relationship-focused approach that attends to continuous change at various levels. Nevertheless, the context and the phase of a conflict determine which approach is the most appropriate strategy for the case concerned among the different approaches to handling conflict constructively (Cohrs et al., 2018).

In addition to the conflict-focused concepts and approaches, there are also peace-focused concepts and approaches developed to understand the move towards peace. Even the meaning of the word ‘peace’ is discussed in order to provide a comprehensive meaning that should address and capture all aspects of societal and political relations. For instance, Galtung (1969) distinguishes between ‘negative peace’, which means the absence of direct and overt violence, and ‘positive peace’, which requires the absence of structural violence and systematic oppression and the presence of social justice. Moreover, peace-making is seen as efforts toward reaching a more durable peace as well as the prevention of war at interstate and intercultural levels, such as rebuilding criminal justice systems and the establishment of law enforcement (Blumberg, 2006). Peace-building is seen as the restructuring of society to promote political, economic and social systems that minimize structural and direct violence such as institutionalized racism, sexism and poverty, and to promote justice (Blumberg, 2006). In order to emphasize that the abolition of war requires the transformation of not only institutional structures but also deep cultural roots, the United Nations formulated the concept

of a 'culture of peace' in the General Assembly of the United Nations (A/52/191), in 1997.

The concept is described as follows:

[A] culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, traditions and customs, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reflect and are directed towards respect for life, for human beings and their rights, the rejection of violence in all its forms, the recognition of the equal rights of men and women, the recognition of the rights of everyone to freedom of expression, opinion and information, attachment to the principles of democracy, freedom, justice, development for all, tolerance, solidarity, pluralism and acceptance of differences and understanding between nations, between ethnic, religious, cultural and other groups and between individuals. (United Nations, 1997)

Uses of the concepts of peace-building and culture of peace emphasize the need for deep embedding of values of peace, justice, and respect for human rights and cultural differences into the fabric, institutions and channels of communication of societies. After direct violence has ceased, mostly through peace agreements at the political level, social-psychological changes in relationships between former opponents are required to tackle structural violence and build lasting peace. Bar-Tal and Bennick (2004) describe the process of creating these changes that would lead to mutual acceptance, trust and positive attitudes as reconciliation. For a reconciliation between former rival groups, societal beliefs about one's own group, one's rival group, the relationships between groups, the history of the conflict, goals and motivations for the future need to be transformed from those that maintain conflict to those that constitute the foundations of a peace culture (Bar-Tal, 2009). In order to facilitate reconciliation, peace education programmes are designed and implemented (Bar-Tal, Rosen, & Nets-Zehngut, 2009; Salomon, 2006); however, it is a complex process without a formal beginning or end or without linear progress towards peaceful relations. Bar-Tal (2009) argues that reconciliation begins when groups in conflict question their beliefs, goals, motivations and emotions about the conflict, and each other's future relations (Bar-Tal, 2009).

It has become crystal clear that moving toward peace actually means social change that



involves transformation in many aspects of society and a form of change in which the origin and directions are not so explicit. The complexity of conflict situations, the complex dynamics of peace processes, and the interplay of various structural and societal levels make it even more difficult to actualize and understand. However, the conceptualization of social change as continuous historically and socially contingent cultural processes that take place through communication at various levels in a society is highly beneficial in understanding how change is proposed, represented and comes about – if it does (Jensen & Wagoner, 2012). In accordance with this conceptualization, Howarth et al. (2013) suggest taking the analysis of the context as a focus of the analysis of change, because the social, historical, ideological and dynamic nature of context promotes or inhibits social change by imposing some representations over others as well as allowing resistance and controversy. Hence, I argue that the processes that propel, slow down and retract social change become extremely relevant for the study of moving towards peace.

Moscovici and Markova (2000) argue that what makes social change possible is the articulation of alternative representations by contesting and negotiating the dominant representations; thus the diversity in public understanding and how it is treated in the social and political context become a central concern. In other words, the questions of how people construct different shared representations of the same events, how they deal with others' representations, and how they coordinate their action and mobilize public support to impact on social relations and political structures become crucial in understanding how change becomes possible and takes place in the move from conflict to peace (Wagoner, 2014).

Similarly, Bar-Tal (2009) states that the success of reconciliation depends on communicating societies changing their societal beliefs from supporting conflict to favouring peaceful relations, and persuading hesitating and opposing group members to favour peaceful relations. However, the conflict context following the breakdown of the peace process and its public

framing can lead society members to focus more on themselves in processing new information about the conflict, to reject criticism and increase pressures towards conformity (Bar-Tal, 2004). The bidirectional relationship between social and political structures and society members indicates that both influence each other simultaneously. The ideas of reciprocity and simultaneity in this relationship are an essential presupposition for social change (Moscovici & Markova, 2000).

In order to understand the complexities of conflict and social change towards peace, the plurality and dynamic nature of social knowledge needs to be addressed. To do so, the explanations at the level of individual cognition need to be complemented by holistic and contextual approaches (Bar-Tal, 2006; Hewer & Taylor, 2007; Kelman, 2012). Social constructionist approaches offer theoretical frameworks to address the interplay between society and its members through the plurality of social knowledge, as well as their transformations. Addressing these interactions between the non-violent management of conflict and the movement toward socially just structures is required to promote cooperative and equitable relationships across levels in a society (Christie, 2006). What follows below is a brief explanation of social constructionist approaches and the social representations theory as an appropriate constructionist perspective to study intergroup conflict and its transformation.

### **Constructionist approach to peace**

Social constructionism views discourse about the world not as a reflection but as a product of social interaction. In this epistemological orientation toward knowledge, the explanatory focus is oriented toward the processes and structure of social interaction that is historically and culturally situated (Gergen, 1985). Language functions both as a system of reference and as a form of social participation, thus typically the focus is on the language forms that pervade the society and their functions in regard to social activities (Gergen, 1985). Hence, explanations of the world constitute forms of social action, because they function to support

and maintain particular patterns, and reject and exclude others at the same time (Gergen, 1985).

The benefits of a constructionist approach to the study of peace correspond to a new perspective in peace psychology that favours contextualized research, multilevel analysis focusing on interactions and a conceptually differentiated approach (Christie, 2006). To start with, the way in which constructionist approaches conceptualize constructs as being socially constructed as well as socially constitutive addresses the interactions between society –its political structures and social relations among members. For instance, Hewer (2012) explicates that representations generated by the culture also serve to endorse the culture, therefore they are both source and recipient. This circular nature of the process acts as a shield against challenges from within for the foundational beliefs (Hewer, 2012), but also it provides opportunities for change while building an association between new representations and culture.

Moreover, constructionist approaches are interested in social, political and cultural constructions of concepts as they are used in real life, as well as functions of these constructions. To illustrate this, Gibson (2011) presents a critical discursive peace psychology that is “a new approach to the analysis of ‘peace’, not so much as a goal to be first defined and then achieved, but as a cultural phenomenon to be placed under the critical microscope itself” (p. 244). According to this new approach, political, cultural and social constructions of peace need to be investigated in order to understand particular political and social goals that are aimed at by using these constructions instead of treating the concept of peace as transparent. Likewise, Hewer (2012) argues that notions like peace, democracy, justice and war do not have universal definitions but are rather positions based on knowledge, values and beliefs. For instance, the concept of peace was referred to by both advocates and opponents of the military intervention in Iraq in 2003 to advance their own rhetorical position in a

television programme discussion in the United Kingdom (Gibson, 2011).

Similarly, Gavriely-Nuri (2010) suggests focusing on how the language of peace is used in order to understand the functions and consequences of particular uses of the language. Since peace is considered a universally accepted goal, beliefs about peace in societies engaged in conflicts are functional because the societies present themselves as peace lovers and peace seekers to themselves and to the outside world in order to enhance their positive social identity (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005). Gavriely-Nuri (2010) distinguishes between supportive and oppressive peace discourses in terms of positivity vs negativity, bilateralism vs unilateralism and concreteness vs abstractness used in language. To illustrate how the language of peace may be used in a way to discredit peace-making initiatives, Gavriely-Nuri (2010) argues that the Israeli peace discourse transforms peace from a concrete legal concept into an abstract ideal and refers to peace to legitimize the use of military power. Similarly, Hewer and Taylor (2007) argue that the term 'terrorism' is a linguistic tool used to grant or deny legitimacy to any politically motivated violence. Replacing the term 'terrorism' with the term 'politically motivated violence' would require confronting the political objectives and their legitimacy; state military action would fall within this definition, which may reduce its claim of moral high ground. Hence, as collective explanation and understanding is formed through the selective use of language and discourse, social change, politics and language use become inextricably intertwined (Wenden & Schaffner, 1995).

The focus on political and social constructions of peace, uses of the language of peace, and their particular social and political consequences display the consideration of social, political and historical contexts in the analysis, interpretation and explanation of social practices. Exploring the unique social and historically situated perspectives of the different social groups in conflicts helps in addressing the complexity of conflict situations (Vollhardt & Bilali, 2008; Wagoner, 2014).

Social representations theory is a constructionist approach to the study of social knowledge; it embraces the plurality and dynamics of social knowledge. In the social representations approach, controversies about politics, religion, territory, economics or values are not solely a difference of opinion that can be transformed by rational argument, they are based on different versions of reality that are constructed through existing social and cultural structures (Hewer, 2012). Similarly, Elcheroth et al. (2011) argue that social representations theory makes a unique contribution regarding the range of social factors it introduces to the processes of knowledge construction. Hewer (2012) points out that social representations theory provides an insight into explaining how “the dynamics of cultural institutional power become central to our understanding of peace and conflict” as political elites, media and academics decide what constitutes knowledge, valuable, true and false within the culture.

In addition to explaining how social reality is reproduced, the social representations approach aims to explain how it can be transformed; it is about social change as much as about social reproduction (Elcheroth et al., 2011). Since the theory takes into consideration the fact that people are exposed to and often aware of conflicting versions of reality, and particular contexts frame and anchor particular interpretations, Elcheroth et al. (2011) argue that social representations theory is a theory of political public opinion and collective behaviour. What distinguishes social representations theory and makes it appropriate to this research project is its elaborations about how different kinds of social knowledge exist together and interact, in turn creating or preventing social change.

### ***Social representations theory***

The founder of social representations theory, Serge Moscovici, was interested in common sense, specifically the question of how a new idea penetrates ordinary experience, everyday language and the cultural life of a society (Moscovici & Markova, 2000). In the prevalent mode of individualist approaches in social psychology, the study of common sense links

individuals and society to their culture, language and history. Social representations theory suggests studying thinking as a social process and puts the ‘social’ back in social psychology (Howarth, 2006).

Social representations theory deals with how reality is constructed collectively, how social knowledge comes to be shared and how it can be transformed (Elcherath et al., 2011; Wagner et al., 1999). When we pass from an individualistic to a social vision of knowledge, the processes of formation, circulation and transformation of knowledge are seen as processes of communication (Moscovici & Markova, 2000). They are dynamic processes of personal-, interpersonal- and societal-level communication (Howarth, 2006). Since people try to conceive, and communicate about, social realities in terms of ‘other’, social representations are seen as existing in an ego–other object relation (Markova, 2003). Wagner et al. describe this aspect beautifully as “instead of imagining representations within minds, it is better to imagine them across minds” (Wagner et al., 1999, p. 95).

The questions of how different versions of the same object coexist, how people cope with diverse representations and how different meanings are fought over are the fundamental concerns of social representations theory in explaining the plurality and dynamics of social knowledge (Howarth, 2006). Accordingly, the unit of analysis is a communicative unit, “taking each other into account, and being co-ordinated by we-intentions” regarding a ‘future-for-us’ project (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008, p. 343).

By forming social representations, we make sense of significant events and objects and constitute reality. The process of forming representations consists of two mechanisms of thought: anchoring and objectification. Anchoring is classifying and naming the unfamiliar object by using existing categories and representations; it can be considered as symbolic coping with the unfamiliar (Wagner et al., 1999). It helps to communicate about the object and represent it. The second mechanism is objectification: the transformation of the new object into a form of concept or image in reality through communication and elaboration,

whereby it has a meaning in reality, and then becomes part of a common sense (Moscovici, 1984; Wagner et al., 1999). To illustrate this, Moscovici (1961/2008), in his seminal study *La psychanalyse, son image et son public*, presents how different social milieus in France make psychoanalysis meaningful and part of common sense by anchoring it in their existing world views, interpreting it with their own terminology and objectifying it in a symbol. Moscovici also identifies the communication genre the French press used in introducing psychoanalysis according to the source, the goal and the logic of messages. The liberal press distances itself from the representational object, does not take a position, and gives voices to experts and encourages opinions. The Catholic press, however, accepts some aspects of psychoanalysis to propagate their own world views and encourage attitudes. The communist press rejects psychoanalysis by relating it to capitalism; by doing so it employs propaganda to encourage stereotypes.

It is important to bear in mind that these processes, anchoring and objectification, are located in the intersubjective space between the self, the other and the object world. They are not seen as separate entities in social representations theory, but as interdependent and co-constructing each other (Jovchelovitch, 2007). People are inherently reflexive about “our knowledge of our own minds, our knowledge of other minds, and even our knowledge of other minds’ knowledge of ourselves” (Elcherath et al., 2011, p. 739). Hence, our ideas and identities become meaningful in relation to others (Markova, 2003) and social representations exist only in the relational encounter with others (Howarth, 2006). They become intersubjectively agreed realities (Howarth, 2006); the things taken for granted together in the encounters indicate what is intersubjectively agreed reality (Elcherath et al., 2011). Forming a representation is a communication process that consists of dialogue, debate, cooperation and conflict within and across individuals and social groups (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008; Howarth, 2006).

Moreover, social representations are formed in the intergroup context; social identity is seen as a consequence of representations being shared in a group (Wagner et al., 1999). Similarly, social representations affect the co-construction of social identities and their boundaries (Breakwell, 1993). Different communities with differing power interact over the object of representation through their representations (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008). The future of the representational project is dependent on these interactions because social representations are generated by groups to serve a group purpose: for instance, to dominate or to resist other communities (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008). As different representations compete in their claims to reality, struggle, conflict and resistance take place in processes of representation (Howarth, 2006).

How social groups develop their own interpretations of the unfamiliar phenomenon depends on their history, culture and conditions (Wagner et al., 1999). These processes are based on representations of history that are reflected upon to make sense of new current challenges (Liu & Hilton, 2005). Since social representations are about doing as well as thinking, they are shaped by various factors that constrain social practices such as environment and institutions as well (Elcheroth et al., 2011). Moreover, social identities affect the development, use and sharing of social representations (Breakwell, 1993): for instance, they determine conditions for acceptance or rejection of new representations (Wagner et al., 1999). Similarly, intergroup power relations should be taken into account in explaining how social representations develop; they also play a crucial role in the acceptance of alternative social representations (Breakwell, 1993). Hence, the process of representing is a collective and ideological activity that is shaped by the social relations and the power within a given historical moment (Augoustinos, 2001, p. 207).

The process of representing helps in dealing with novelty and by doing that functions to reproduce or challenge the societal order and the system of meaning (Wagner et al., 1999). Moreover, social representations are constitutive of social practices, that is, changes in social



representations can lead to changes in the institutional world (Elcheroth et al., 2011). Social representations set the limits of thinkable and unthinkable actions (Elcheroth et al., 2011): for instance, social representations might contribute to social change by mobilizing individual and collective action (Klein & Licata, 2003). Shared systems of meaning and mutual expectations support collective practices that create, maintain or transform social representations (Elcheroth et al., 2011). These elaborations about the origins, structures and functions of social knowledge offer insights into the dynamics and plurality of social knowledge, thereby rendering the theory a theory of communication and social change (Wagner et al., 1999). Hence, social representations have bidirectional relationships with social identities, social practices and political structures.

In the social representations approach it is crucial to investigate not only dominant and pervasive representations but also alternative and marginal ones in a society, since their articulation may contest the dominant representations and change the way they are treated in social and political context, in turn paving the way for social change. For instance, Kilby (2017) demonstrated that elite Muslims constructed peace as central to Muslim identity and a common value of Muslims and non-Muslims that doesn't require rejection of all forms of violence, such as defensive violence in a radio debate about terrorism in the United Kingdom (UK). This construction of peace is used as a resource to challenge the mainstream UK terrorism discourse that links terrorism with Muslims (Kilby, 2017).

In social representations theory, plurality is one of the fundamental concerns; to start with, the theory distinguishes itself by considering inconsistency as the natural internal flexibility of human cognition, that is, being able to employ different ways of reasoning in the domains they approach with a different perspective and information (Moscovici, 1961/2008). This phenomenon, described as cognitive polyphasia, is seen as internal flexibility because people move constantly between identities and respond to the complexities of social life

(Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez, 2015). To illustrate this phenomenon, Kelman's (2007) analysis of attitudes of societies during the Israeli–Palestinian peace process in the 1990s and afterwards can be referred to. While new attitudes regarding negotiations developed alongside old attitudes about the conflict during the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, the breakdown of negotiations and continuation of conflict did not wipe out the support for negotiating a peaceful compromise (Kelman, 2007). The findings reveal that people are able to adopt different, seemingly contradictory, attitudes at the same time.

Moreover, there are many ways in which plurality is treated: social representations themselves deal with plurality and they enable individuals to negotiate the plurality of alternative (potentially competing) representations (Gillespie, 2008). Shaping social context, manipulation of who has access to the debate, setting thinkable and unthinkable limits are some examples of ways of dealing with plurality.

In encounters between competing representations, ego and the other represents objects to negotiate their positions either as co-agents of a joint action or influence on one another (Markova, 2003). Recognition or denial of the knowledge of the other is seen as the fundamental principle underpinning communication styles and cognitive outcomes of a knowledge encounter (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez, 2015). Recognition requires being able to decentre from one's own perspective and take others' perspectives (Jovchelovitch, 2007). It is essential to take power asymmetry and unequal resources of groups into account while conceptualizing communication processes with the other, since decentring from one's perspective requires resisting the taken-for-granted boundaries between groups, recognizing the other's agency in constructing their representations (Kislioglu, 2017), and understanding the underlying logic of others in their own frames of reference (Sammut & Gaskell, 2010). Hence, peaceful coexistence of different representations is possible with mutual recognition between self and other and perspective-taking in forming a dialogue.

In addition to peaceful coexistence, there are communication processes in which diversity is not accepted, different perspectives are denied and dismissed as wrong and inappropriate (Sammut & Gaskell, 2010). Moreover, Gillespie (2008) explicates meaning processes that can prevent dialogical engagement with alternative representations. In the contexts of plural and competing representations, semantic barriers help to dialogically resist alternative representations and protect core representation from dialogical transformation (Gillespie, 2008). In semantic barriers, knowledge about others is incorporated into one's own knowledge systems in order to strengthen one's own knowledge against challenges (Elchereth et al. 2011; Gillespie, 2008).

To sum up, social identities, relations between social groups, representations of history and culture, and future imaginations become important parts of social representations, different versions of them making the process of representing not only struggle for legitimacy, but also struggle for an agency –“the power to shape mutual expectations within a collective” (Elchereth, et al., 2011, p.745) – in order to enable or impede actions directed toward a particular purpose. For instance, McFee (2016) presented that while citizens represented peace as contingent on changes in socio-economic life, politicians used the promise of peace to “shape the realm of possibilities for citizens’ actions now and in the future” in the Colombian peace process (p. 22). In the social representations approach, various understandings of social phenomena are investigated not only to identify the underlying factors of diversity but also to investigate particular political functions of these understandings.

### **Synthesis: Social representations approach to peace**

Based on a review of social psychological study of conflict and peace and the theoretical elaborations of the social representations theory, it is necessary to put together what have become relevant and essential to the study of the move towards peace. First of all, the existence of the plurality of social knowledge and its dynamic nature is crucial in the move

towards peace since the plurality of social knowledge creates an opportunity to change one's knowledge through interactions with others' knowledge or to welcome diversity. Various identities, positions, experiences, values and beliefs based on historical, political and cultural structures and power relations create various understandings of conflict and various understandings of efforts towards peace making. These various understandings interact with each other in symbolic or physical encounters under the influence of political and cultural structures. How diversity is treated in the social and political context has a significant role. It is important to investigate how diversity – others' representations – is treated at both interpersonal communication and societal levels. Communication strategies and semantic structures can be investigated to identify ways of dealing with others' representations at interpersonal levels. The ways of dealing with diversity at the societal level may include constructions of the social context in which encounters between different representations take place, in particular what forms of actions are construed as appropriate or inappropriate or who can have agency in forming representations. Finally, as a result of these interactions, the initial understandings might be reconstructed and changed in a way to reproduce or transform the political and cultural structures that had impacted their formation. It is important to note here that transforming political and cultural structures also requires mobilizing public support. Social representations are constitutive of social practices, they encourage some forms of action and restrict others. In turn, the social practices based on social representations shape the context in a way that promotes or inhibits social change by helping to (not to) mobilize public support. Hence, it can be argued that the diversity of social knowledge is the crucial factor in the bidirectional relationship between social and political structures and society members. This is a continuous and ever-changing process. This framework can be described as the social representations approach to peace processes. In this thesis, it benefits from methodological tools of discourse analysis.

Although various attempts to establish cooperative relations between discursive psychology and the social representations approach are explicated in social psychology (e.g. Batel & Castro, 2018; Gibson, 2015), here I refer to critical discourse analysis and its contributions to investigating social representations. The broad focus of critical discourse analysis on political structures and situations and its elaborations regarding social change are better suited to this research project on the move towards peace. Although I briefly explain the similarities between critical discourse analysis and the social representations theory, it is important to concede that comparing or bringing together these theoretical perspectives is beyond this research project.

Firstly, the conceptualization of discourse in critical discourse studies, its formation and functions are very similar to the elaborations of the concept of social representations.

Discourse is seen as a form of social practice; similar to social representations, it is characterized as socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Discourse is shaped by social and political structures and situations, it constitutes objects of social knowledge and social identities of and relationships between people and groups. As people perform social actions through discourse, it helps to reproduce and maintain the social status quo and it can contribute to challenging and transforming it (Fairclough, 1992). Moreover, critical discourse analysis provides a conceptual and analytical framework to the investigation of social representations, since it takes the historical, cultural and political contexts and power relations into account in the analyses of the formation and functions of social practices (Wodak & Meyer, 2008) (see the methodology section for a detailed explanation). Before providing information about the background of the case study chosen for this research project, I continue with descriptions of the empirical studies.

### **The research questions**

I have explained how the social representations approach might contribute to the understanding of the complexity of the move towards peace. In light of these elaborations, I

aim to provide an understanding of the peace/resolution process. To be able to do so, I look at the diversity of social knowledge (the impact of history, culture, political and social structures in constructions of the different understandings), and the dynamic nature of social knowledge (the interactions between different understandings and the impact of changing physical realities on these understandings) and the impact of different understandings in terms of challenging or reproducing existing social relations and political structures. In order to investigate these issues, I formulate three general research questions:

- What are the different understandings of peace and the peace/resolution process?
- What are the discursive functions of these different understandings?
- How do these different understandings deal with the plurality, especially competing understandings, and orient people to deal with others' understandings?

To be able to address these questions, I conduct three different empirical studies using data from the media (newspaper articles and readers' comments). Although these questions constitute the main concerns of this research project, I investigate them at various conceptual levels. First, I investigate the plurality and dynamics of social knowledge by focusing on the concept of peace in the first study, in which I use corpus linguistics methods to analyse various constructions of peace and their change. Then, I investigate processes of representing the peace process and their influence in dealing with others' representations and constructing the social context through the in-depth analysis of the peace/resolution process in the second study, in which I conduct a critical discourse analysis. Lastly, I investigate the ways of dealing with diversity at the interpersonal level via computer-mediated communication in the third study, in which I conduct both qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis on online readers' comments. The details of the specific research agenda and methods of these studies are described briefly below.

## ***The empirical studies***

### *Study 1 What 'peace' means in the peace/resolution process*

In the first empirical study, I investigate uses of 'peace' in order to understand how constructions of peace change as the peace process continues over time, as various constructions emerge and are adapted to changing physical realities. I used a corpus 610 news articles with three different analyses, which are: (1) quantitative comparison of the uses of the word 'peace' at different phases of the peace/resolution process across two groups of newspapers; (2) qualitative analysis of the uses of peace through its collocates; and (3) network analysis of the relationship between the word 'peace' and other concepts. These analyses are guided by the following questions, respectively:

- Is there any significant difference in the number of times the word 'peace' is used among two groups of newspapers and at different phases of the peace process?
- How is peace constructed through its collocates in the two groups of newspapers at different phases of the peace process? What are the discursive functions of these constructions?
- How do constructions of peace change as the peace process continues over time?
- How is the concept of peace related to other concepts in the two groups of newspapers at different phases of the peace process?

### *Study 2 Social representations of the peace process reflected in the media*

In the second empirical study, I investigate how different social representations of the peace process influence treatment of others' representations and the social context in which the peace process is discussed. In order to identify this, I ask the following questions:

- How is the peace process represented by different groups in Turkey as reflected in the media?
- How do these representations draw on various category constructions, cultural resources and argumentation strategies?

- How is social context constructed and how are representations of others treated?

### *Study 3 Understanding the peace process through the online readers' comments*

In the third empirical study, I aim to identify communication strategies used in treating others' representations with an analysis of the readers' comments in the online comment section of a Turkish newspaper. In order to understand the encounters between representational systems and their effects on dialogical engagement in the case of the peace/resolution process, the following questions are formulated:

- How is the peace process made meaningful by the commenters on a news article about the peace process?
- What are the communicative strategies used to deal with others' knowledge?
- Do these communicative strategies help facilitate or prevent dialogical engagement with others?

## **Methodology**

### ***Why analyse media?***

The media is one of the platforms where intellectual and discursive struggles over ideas take place (Jensen & Wagoner, 2012). It has a crucial role in the reproduction and dissemination of social representations (Moscovici, 1961/2008). Mass media has an influence in shaping what we think that other people think, – meta-knowledge (Elcheroth, et al. 2011). Elcheroth et al. (2011) further argue that people can be influenced by their inferences of the impact of media on others; by doing so people include media message in their communication strategies for interpersonal communication. This may result in validating the impression that the message is relevant to others, hence reinforcing the original message. Conversely, the impression that certain interpretations are not shared may lead to self-censorship. Hence, mass media exposure influences people's beliefs about shared beliefs as well as perceptions of social norms in terms of accepted intergroup and intragroup behaviour (Elcheroth, et al. 2011).



Moreover, media has a crucial role in the social and political move towards peace. Wolfsfeld (2011) argues that the construction of news about peace is directly linked to the state of the political environment, since the level of political consensus in support of a peace process and the number and intensity of crises in the process as well as the level of sensationalism as a dominant news value determine whether media's role in the peace process is destructive or helpful. To promote peace, media can emphasize the benefits that peace can bring, raise the legitimacy of groups or leaders working for peace, and help transform images of the enemy (Bar-Tal, 2009; Kempf, 2003; Wolfsfeld, 2001). When media emphasizes the risks and dangers associated with compromise, raises the legitimacy of those opposed to concessions, and reinforces negative stereotypes of the enemy, it serves as a destructive agent in the peace process (Kempf, 2003; Wolfsfeld, 2001). For instance, Mandelzis (2007) pointed out the discourse of harmony created by Israeli newspapers by behaving as if peace was already present in the 1990s. When media representations of peace do not correspond to the physical realities, unrealistic expectations are created that may cause frustration when they are not realized. In light of these elaborations about the role of media in shaping people's views and facilitating or complicating a peace process, it is appropriate to use media data to investigate understandings of the peace process and how plurality is treated.

### ***Media in Turkey***

I chose five newspapers that reflect a diversity of political positions in Turkey's media. Before introducing them, it is important to mention the poor situation of media independence in Turkey. According to the Reporters without Borders, Turkey's ranking in press freedom was 154<sup>th</sup> in 2013 and 2014. This poor condition of press freedom is related to the substantial power of the state in the media reflected through the restrictive media legislation, governments' selective enforcement of taxes and bans, the launching of defamation suits to pressure the media, and the media owners' financial interests in obtaining government contracts and concessions (Carkoglu & Yavuz, 2010). However, I argue that the worrisome

picture of press freedom is not a reason to refrain from examining the media, but rather the reason to scrutinize it in order to investigate whether the newspapers develop their own views of the political phenomenon or only disseminate the views of the power holders.

Kaya and Cakmur (2010) claim another character of the media in Turkey that might be important for this study to take into account. They categorize two major camps in the media, namely the mainstream media concerned with increasing its commercial value and the conservative/ pro-government media concerned with the dissemination of their viewpoints. They further argue that the media outlets of the two camps not only express their own interests and causes but also suppress the opposing camp's views. While this point may suggest the media in Turkey present an interesting case for investigating how plurality is treated, it is crucial to remember it in interpreting the findings. Next, I introduce the five newspapers that the data used in the thesis are extracted from.

### ***The newspapers sample***

I chose five newspapers that reflect a diversity of positions in the media of Turkey: *Hürriyet*, *Sabah*, *Sözcü*, *Özgür Gündem* and *Evrensel*. While *Hürriyet*, *Sabah* and *Sözcü* are among the most popular daily newspapers in Turkey, *Özgür Gündem* and *Evrensel* are among the most popular newspapers with left-wing positions (MedyaTava, 2016).

*Hürriyet* was owned by Doğan Media Group, which controls almost half of Turkey's private media with a chain of seven national dailies and television channels (Kaya & Cakmur, 2010).

*Hürriyet* is among the most popular dailies in Turkey, with a circulation of approximately 339,000 in 2016 (Medyatava, 2016). *Hürriyet* can be described as 'pro-state' as it has always followed the official ideology of the state. After a period of ambivalent relations consisting of huge tax fines imposed by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, the Dogan Group became more susceptible to the AKP's pressure for political subservience (Kaya & Cakmur, 2010). In 2018, the Doğan Media Group was sold to a pro-government

conglomerate, Demirören Holding,; which is seen as the end of pluralism and independent journalism in the mainstream media in Turkey by the Reporters without Borders (2018).

*Sabah* had a circulation of approximately 306,000 in 2016 (Medyatava, 2016). It is argued that *Sabah* was sold to the the Çalık Group in order to help the AKP's struggle to control the media to disseminate its ideology in 2008 (Saran, 2014). Since then, the newspaper has been controlled by other companies that are known to have close relationships with the AKP government. The latest owner is the Turkuaz Group which is also close to the AKP government, therefore it can be considered as pro-government.

*Sözcü* is owned by Estetik Publication, a small publication company, and has a circulation of approximately 289,000 (Medyatava, 2016). It is considered by the Open Source Center (2008) to be an ardent follower of Kemalist nationalism, supportive of radical secularism and an anti-AKP newspaper .

*Özgür Gündem*, a pro- Kurdish movement newspaper, owned by Ersin Press Publication, has a circulation of 7,303 (Medyatava, 2016). It presents the Kurdish question from a Kurdish perspective, which is why it is considered as Kurdish media (Arsan, 2013). It has been shut down many times accused of helping the PKK; the last shutdown took place in August 2016.

*Evrensel* is considered a left-wing newspaper, owned by Bülten Press Publication; it had a circulation of 5,754 in 2016 (Medyatava, 2016). *Evrensel* voices the grievances of workers and minorities and criticizes the economic, labour and ethnic policies of the government (the Open Source Center, 2008).

#### *The events of the peace/resolution process*

In order to choose texts to examine, first I identified the important events of the peace process after a consultation with five academics and one journalist working on the subject. These consultations yielded eight events, among which three events were highlighted in all consultations, so I categorized them as the most important events of the peace process: The

Newroz Celebration in Diyarbakir on 21 March 2013; the Kobane Protests on 6–7<sup>h</sup> October 2014, and the Dolmabahçe Agreement on 28 February 2015. While the Newroz Celebration and the Dolmabahçe Agreement can be considered as outcomes of the negotiations, public announcements regarding the issues and the steps of the peace process, the Kobane Protests were a crisis in the process. The eight events occurred during the time period of 2013 to 2015, covering the start of the peace/resolution process, the crisis that endangered it, and on through to after the crisis. I grouped these events in a way that reflects the different phases of the peace process. The longitudinal data set helps us to focus on the representations in the making (Moscovici & Markova, 2000).

**The beginning phase – 2013:**

- 21 March 2013: Call for withdrawal of the PKK militants from Turkey in the Newroz celebration in Diyarbakir
- 26 June 2013: The Wise People Commission's meeting with the prime minister
- 1 Oct 2013: The democratization package consisting of law proposals
- 6 June 2014: The Resolution Process Conference of the ministers of the AKP
- 10 July 2014: A law change that legitimizes the peace process

**The crisis in the process – 2014:**

- 6–7 Oct 2014: A crisis: Protests against the siege of Kobane by Islamic State (IS)

**The development phase – 2015:**

- 1 Dec 2014: Öcalan's draft for the peace process is announced

- 28 Feb 2015: A joint press conference of the members of the AKP and the HDP (Dolmabahçe Agreement): Declaration of negotiation items and call to leave the guns behind

### ***Data collection***

I gathered all the news articles about these eight events, including the day these events happened and the three following days from the websites of the newspapers. The articles consist of the primary reports of the events, the talks of politicians about the events and the news analyses. I used the whole corpus of 611 articles in the corpus-based discourse analysis in the first study, but I divided them into groups according to the phases of the peace process and the position of the newspapers. In the second study, I used only 34 news articles, which is manageable for an in-depth critical discourse analysis (the reasons for choosing these 34 articles are explained in the context of the study below in the third chapter). In the third study, I used 140 readers' comments elicited by a news article in *Hürriyet* in 2013 in the qualitative content analysis of the readers' comments.

The three studies have commonalities regarding the data. In the first and the second studies, I used the same sample of newspapers and the critical events of the peace/resolution process. While I used the large sample of 610 news articles about the five events in the first study, I extracted 34 news articles about the three most important events from the large sample in the second study. I chose the newspaper with the most popular website from the same sample of the newspapers in order to gather the online readers' comments. The news article that the readers' comments are written about is one of the 34 news articles analysed in the second study. I chose analyses to examine these data according to the research questions developed for the specific aims of each study and the characteristics of the data, such as size.

## *Analyses*

In this thesis, I conducted four different analyses that are relevant to the research questions and the data used in empirical studies (see Table 1). The methods of corpus linguistics are seen as appropriate for analysing the big data of newspaper articles. Network analysis is used to complement the focus on one concept in the corpus linguistics analysis. Critical discourse analysis is construed as suitable to analyse a small number of newspaper articles. While qualitative content analysis is used to investigate understandings of the peace process through readers' comments, discourse analysis is used to investigate communication strategies in the readers' comments.

Table 1. 1 Overview of the empirical studies

Study	Research questions	Data	Analyses
Study 1 in Chapter 2: What 'peace' means in the peace/resolution process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there any significant difference in the number of times the word 'peace' is used among two groups of newspapers and at different phases of the peace process?</li> <li>• How is peace constructed through its collocates in the two groups of newspapers at different phases of the peace process? What are the discursive functions of these constructions?</li> <li>• How do constructions of peace change as the peace process continues over time?</li> <li>• How is the concept of peace related to other concepts in the two groups of newspapers at different phases of the peace process?</li> </ul>	611 news articles	<p>Corpus-based discourse analysis</p> <p>Network analysis</p>
Study 2 in Chapter 3: Social representations of the peace process reflected in the media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is the peace process represented by different groups in Turkey as reflected in the media?</li> <li>• How do these representations draw on various category constructions, cultural resources, and argumentation strategies?</li> <li>• How is social context constructed and how are representations of others treated?</li> </ul>	34 news articles	Critical discourse analysis

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Study 3 in Chapter 4: Understanding the peace process through the online comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is the peace process made meaningful by the commenters on a news article about the peace process?</li> <li>• What are the communicative strategies used to deal with others' knowledge?</li> <li>• Do these communicative strategies help facilitate or prevent dialogical engagement with others?</li> </ul>	138 online readers' comments	Qualitative content analysis Discourse analysis
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### *Corpus-based discourse analysis*

Corpus linguistics (CL) is described as a collection of both quantitative and qualitative methods that are performed on large collections of electronically stored, naturally occurring texts (Baker, et al., 2008). Corpus linguistics methods help analyse large amounts of natural data to be able to observe variances and meaning constructions in real-life discourses. These analyses can be corpus-driven or corpus-based. While in corpus-driven analysis, the corpus itself becomes the source of research questions about language, in corpus-based analysis, a preselected set of terms that are considered to be relevant 'sites' for discussion of argumentation and representation are used (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). For instance, I investigate constructions of the concept of peace in a corpus-based analysis in the first empirical study of this project.

Corpus linguistics software offers quantitative analyses of collocates of a target word: that is, words that co-occur with the target word within a predetermined span. A collocation analysis, based on statistical measures, informs the analyst what is to be analysed qualitatively, since the meaning of a word in context is created through its collocates (Stubbs, 2001).

Corpus linguistics software also presents a concordance list: that is, lists of a given word or word cluster with its co-text on either side. By assessing individual occurrences of search words and qualitatively examining their collocational environments, it is possible to describe salient semantic patterns and identify discursive functions (Baker, 2006). The analysis of concordance lists is a qualitative method based on observation of evidence of concordance,

classification according to salient features, generalization of patterns, spotting interesting outliers, and then interpretation of patterns (Baker, 2006; Sinclair, 2003). The interpretation requires taking the historical and political context that shapes the production and reception of the natural texts analysed into consideration in order to be socially meaningful (Mautner, 2016). In comparing data sets, the presence, absence or frequency of items becomes crucial in evaluating corpus evidence (Mautner, 2016).

The corpus-based discourse analysis I conducted and explain in the second chapter is based on the discourse studies' approach to the relation of language and social, that is while language reflects social constructions, it also shapes constructions of social structures and relationships (Mautner, 2016). For instance, in this thesis I chose the word 'peace' to analyse.

### *Network analysis*

In making use of network analysis, social sciences have a tendency to focus on human networks, studied as social network analysis (Borgatti, Mehra, Brass, & Labianca, 2009). In this thesis, I focused on networks of words, which can be considered text network analysis and places my research closer to linguistics. Text network analysis can be described as the representation of a text as a network. It can be used to categorize textual data, observe communities of closely related concepts and to identify the most influential concepts that produce meaning and meaning relations and circulations (Paranyushkin, 2011).

I used collocation relations of words as data in the network analysis, so the networks I formed are better referred to as collocation networks. Collocation networks are used in corpus linguistics studies because words and their collocates do not occur in isolation, they are part of a complex network of semantic relationships. Collocation networks have the potential to provide more insight into the meaning construction and semantic structure of a corpus by revealing relationships between multiple words (Baker, 2016; Brezina, McEnery, & Wattam, 2015).



### *Critical discourse analysis*

Critical discourse studies are the school of an interdisciplinary study of social phenomena and the study of the functions of social, political, cultural and cognitive contexts of language use (Wodak & Meyer, 2008). In critical discourse studies, discourse is seen as a form of social practice; it is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is characterized by its interest in unveiling ideologies and power by focusing on naturally occurring language use (Wodak & Meyer, 2008).

Approaches in critical discourse studies draw on different theoretical backgrounds and use different data and methodologies (see Wodak & Meyer, 2008 for a review of different approaches). Among various ways of performing critical discourse analysis, I chose the discourse historical approach (DHA) developed by Reisigl and Wodak (2001), because it provides a systemic and structured process of analysis as well as finely grounded elaborations of context and critique that suit the research questions and the data of this research project.

The analysis process of the DHA consists of identifying topics of discourse, discursive strategies and linguistic means, and interpreting these aspects in terms of the historical context. Discursive strategy is described as a more or less intentional plan of practices (discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistics goal (Wodak, 2001). Discursive strategies are composed of constructions, characterizations and presentations of actors, events and phenomena as well as justifications for these characterizations (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

In the analysis, context is taken into account at a broad level, including the immediate language-text, the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships and the broader social, political and historical contexts (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). These various aspects of the context are used to evaluate the findings.

DHA derives from critical theory and concentrates its efforts on developing a conceptual framework for political discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2008). It embraces a complex concept of critique that consist of three levels: (i) text or discourse immanent critique, which aims to discover inconsistencies, dilemmas in the text or discourse structures; (ii) socio-diagnostic critique, which is concerned with unveiling the manipulative character of discursive practices by using contextual knowledge about social and political relations; and (iii) prognostic critique, which can contribute to the transformation and improvement of communication. CDA is also concerned with making research choices transparent and justifying why certain interpretations of discursive objects seem more valid than others, hence it requires self-reflection at every point of research (Wodak, 2001).

#### *Qualitative content analysis*

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) is “a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material” (Schreier, 2012, p.1). The analysis involves building a coding frame including several main categories, each with their own set of subcategories, dividing the material into units of coding, trying out the coding frame, evaluating and modifying the coding frame, coding all material and interpreting the findings (Schreier, 2012). The QCA is used when meaning of material is less obvious and interpretation is needed to describe the material in particular aspects (Schreier, 2012). It is beneficial in analysing and describing the most important characteristics of large amounts of qualitative data, since it requires the focus to be on one out of a potential multiplicity of meanings (Schreier, 2012). In this thesis, I used the QCA to analyse understandings of the peace/resolution process in readers’ comments in the third study, explained in Chapter four. The next section provides information about the case study of this research project.

### **Background of the case study: Turkey’s Kurdish question**

Turkey’s Kurdish question is chosen as the case study of the research project because the peace/resolution process can be considered as an initiation of a move towards peace. It can be

argued that an existence of a peace process provides an opportunity for the emergence of new discussions about the transformation of a conflict. That is why I chose to focus on the two-year period in which the peace/resolution process took place, in order to explore the dynamics of moving towards peace. What follows below is a brief explanation of the history and the aspects of the Kurdish question and the peace/resolution process.

Despite a multicultural society inherited from the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey was founded as a nation state and made great efforts to create a sense of nationhood based on Turkish ethnicity (Kirisci, 1998). Only religious minorities are recognized in the rights agreed in the Treaty of Lausanne, 1923, but no ethnic minorities. It was feared that granting certain rights to an ethnic minority would inevitably lead to further demands, such as self-determination or similar s by other ethnic groups (Kirisci & Winrow, 1997). This fear accounts for the inclusion of ‘the indivisible integrity of the state with its territory and nation’ in the constitution and other important laws (Kirisci & Winrow, 1997, p.45). The nation-building policies that affected the cultures and identities of different groups were also aimed at modernization and secularization (Van Bruinessen, 1998). This is why a series of rebellions against these policies by Kurdish people is viewed as tribal resistance and religious uprisings caused by regional backwardness (Keyman, 2005, 2012); the ethnic-politic cause, Kurdishness, was ignored (Yegen, 1999). Yegen (1999) refers to this approach as the Turkish state discourse and its denial policy.

In the authoritarian atmosphere following the military coup of 1980, a low-intensity war between the Turkish army and an armed group, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), began. The violent conflict has targeted civilians in many ways, such as the unsolved murders of Kurdish intellectuals and burning down villages during the 1990s. By 2010, the violent conflict had caused the death of approximately 40,000 people (TBMM, 2013) and the displacement of almost one million people in the country (HÜNEE, 2006). Keyman (2012)

argues that society on both sides has become polarized and intolerant as a result of this conflict. During the same period, the struggle for participation in the political system has made the demand for recognition of the Kurdish identity visible, although the hegemonic Turkish nationalism has restricted democratic debate by constantly referring to the perceived threat to territorial integrity (Ozkirimli, 2014). Thereby, it has become almost impossible to separate discursively and politically the demands for the recognition of the Kurdish identity from the violent conflict (Keyman, 2012).

Becoming a candidate for full membership of the European Union in 1999 helped to transform the way Turkey engaged with the Kurdish question as well as introducing some reforms regarding freedom of expression. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) government applied a new policy of negotiation and firmer recognition, publicizing it as the ‘Kurdish Opening’ in 2009. Although the opening made the Kurdish question the primary topic in the political agenda of Turkey, it lasted only a few months because of various bureaucratic problems and the reaction of the political parties and the public regarding the perceived threat to the national identity and territorial integrity (Gunter, 2013). The opening was followed by clashes between the PKK and security forces and the mass arrests of Kurdish intellectuals on charges of being a member of, or aiding, the PKK. Pro-Kurdish parties, however, turned out to be successful in the local and general elections. Yegen (2015) interprets this success as an indication of Kurdish people’s not being happy with “no repression plus slim recognition” politics. In this context, the negotiations between the state and the PKK resumed in 2013 via meetings with Abdullah Öcalan, who is the leader of the PKK and had been serving a life sentence in Imrali island prison since 1999. Representatives of the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) visited Öcalan in the prison and the PKK headquarters in Iraq to facilitate communication between the PKK and the government. This new round of negotiations is called the ‘peace or resolution process’ by the politicians involved and it is the focus of this thesis.

In the Newroz (Spring Festival) celebration in Diyarbakir on 21 March 2013, Öcalan's new proposal for resolution and peace was announced to the public. Yegen (2015) considers the event as one of the first fruits of the process. Following that, a unilateral ceasefire was declared by the PKK, the Wise People Council was formed by the government to discuss the process with the public, a commission in the parliament was formed to discuss the resolution, and most importantly a 'framework law', which provides legal grounds for the peace process by granting the government and the institutions the authority to meet and negotiate with 'terrorist organizations', was enacted.

A serious crisis occurred in the peace process when the Kurdish people took to the streets to protest against the siege of Kobane in Syria, a mostly Kurdish populated town on the border of Turkey, by the Islamic State, and the AKP government's attitude towards the siege in October 2014. The Kobane protests looked like a civil war and caused the death of more than 40 civilians, Yegen (2015) argues that this resemblance to a civil war indicated the necessity of the peace process. Thereby, the peace process resumed, the joint press conference of the members of the AKP government and the HDP deputies announced Öcalan's 10-article draft for the negotiations and his call for disarmament to the public on 28 February 2015 (the event is called the Dolmabahce agreement by its participants). Whether the decision for disarmament or the consensus on the legal and constitutional changes about the 10 articles should be the next step appeared to be an insurmountable disagreement (Yegen, 2015). There were other difficulties and impediments in the peace/resolution process, such as no agreement upon the usefulness of the 'democratization package' (law proposals). After the general election in June 2015, the AKP government broke down the peace process and started military operations in the cities that are mostly populated by Kurds. The operations involved controversial curfews and mass arrests of Kurdish politicians. While the conflict was categorized as a conflict of medium intensity in 2014, during the peace process (HIIK, 2015), it was classified as a highly violent conflict in 2018 in the Conflict Barometer (HIIK, 2019).

Although the state of emergency following the coup attempt in 2016 exacerbated the situation, this thesis refers to a case of limited context, the events that occurred in the context of the peace/resolution process between 2013 and 2015. This time period includes the period in which the peace process was started, publicized, endangered by a crisis and continued after the crisis.

Although the peace process was not considered as a genuine peace process but a shift from a security-coercion paradigm to a security-brotherhood paradigm because the AKP governments' actions in other areas did not coincide with the negotiations (Toktamis, 2015), the public opinion surveys presented an increase in support of a peaceful resolution from 2009 to 2013. According to the MetroPoll public opinion poll in 2009, 31% of the public supported the Kurdish Opening, 21% reported partially supporting the process, while 43% of the public was against it. However, in the MetroPoll public opinion poll in 2013, 67% of the sample supported 'continuing political initiatives to deal with terror', while the remainder supported the idea of fighting to overcome this problem. This increase in support of a peaceful resolution is considered as a great transformation compared to the past, when any suggestions regarding peace negotiations were evaluated as treason (Gunter, 2013). However, at the same time, there were reactions against the peace process, for instance meetings of the Wise People Council with the public were protested against in various cities. The increased public support and the reactions against the process demonstrated the variety of understandings of the peace process in the public discourse.

Although there is some initial understanding that there are different positions, discussions and interpretations of the conflict (Uluğ & Cohrs, 2016), the resolution of the question (Avci, 2014), and the Kurdish Opening (Kislioglu & Cohrs, 2018) in society and in the media (Toros, 2012), it is necessary to understand how existing different positions lose or gain favour in the discussion, thereby opening possibilities for the conflict resolution and social

change toward peace. For instance, Rumelili and Celik (2017) highlight the ontological asymmetry between the secure state and the insecure minority ethnic group as the crucial factor in maintaining various conflict narratives. The period of the peace/resolution process provides an interesting case through which to study how different understandings are developed, treated and changed in making sense of the move towards peace.

## **Chapter 2**

### **What peace means in the peace/resolution process of Turkey**

The idea that peace has a clear-cut, stable, and universal meaning has been challenged in peace studies (Gavriely-Nuri, 2010; Gibson, 2011); political, cultural, and social constructions of peace in different contexts and among different actors have become the subject of investigations. Investigating how peace is defined in social contexts and how the language of peace is used is seen as necessary to understand particular political goals that are aimed at in social contexts (Gavriely-Nuri, 2010; Gibson, 2011). Although various studies revealed diverse understandings of peace among different groups and contexts, how these understandings are adapted to changing realities has not been touched upon. In this chapter, while looking at how peace is constructed during different phases of the peace process in the media, I focus on how the constructions change through encounters of different understandings with each other and in relation to changing physical realities.



### *The concept of 'peace' in peace research*

Uses of the concept of 'peace' to obtain consensus as it is seen as a common wish are interpreted as abuse of the concept by Johan Galtung (1969), who is one of the pioneers of peace research. He then differentiates between negative and positive peace to address different levels of violence and social goals to overcome them. While negative peace refers to the absence of violence, positive peace refers to the existence of social justice. However, Wenden (1995) states that while there is consensus on the notion of negative peace as the absence of war, what the notion of positive peace represents is still emerging. Although negative peace is the dominating view in research topics in peace research institutes as well as among Nobel Peace Prize laureates (Wenden, 1995), the negative and positive peace differentiation is beneficial in clarifying uses of the term 'peace' in research (Cohrs & Boehnke, 2008; Vollhardt, 2012). But there are also attempts to develop comprehensive operationalization of peace that consists of violence and harmony dimensions both as a condition and experience at various levels ranging from global to personal in order to develop appropriate measures for peace and indicators of peace (Anderson, 2004).

Peace scholars emphasize the need to scrutinize how peace is constructed and how it is communicated in order to understand the purposes these constructions are used for (Gavriely-Nuri, 2010; Gibson, 2011). This emphasis is in line with the new perspective in peace psychology that is more sensitive to the geo-historical context, conceptually differentiated, and focused on the interplay of systems (Christie, 2006). Likewise, Hewer (2012) argues that notions such as democracy, peace, justice, and war are not universal truths, but rather moral positions based on knowledge, values, and beliefs and influenced by institutional power.

In constructivist approaches, investigations of cultural, historical, and political influences on constructions of reality and concepts are integrated with analyses of discursive functions of these constructions. The functions are particular social and political goals aimed at with these constructions in social contexts. For instance, the concept of peace was referred to by both advocates and opponents of the military intervention in Iraq in 2003 to advance their own rhetorical position in a television programme discussion in the United Kingdom (Gibson, 2011). Moreover, the constructivist view of language underlying this thesis emphasizes the influence of social, political, and cultural contexts as well as the dynamic force of language in shaping meaning relations that guide humans' goals and efforts (Hewer & Taylor, 2007; Schäffner & Wenden, 1995). Language may be used in a way to discredit peace-making initiations. To illustrate this, Gavriely-Nuri (2010) distinguishes between supportive and oppressive peace discourses in terms of positivity-vs-negativity, bilateralism-vs-unilateralism, and concreteness-vs-abstractness used in language. Gavriely-Nuri (2010) argues that the Israeli peace discourse is an oppressive one, because it transforms peace from a concrete legal concept into an abstract ideal, refers to peace to legitimize the use of military power, and claims a moral asymmetry between the adversaries.

Peace and violence are analysed and explained by considering social, political, and cultural foundations and functions in different understandings of these concepts in constructivist approaches; thereby, not only dominant and pervasive representations of peace but also alternative and marginal ones in a society are examined. To illustrate this, in a radio debate about terrorism in the United Kingdom (UK), elite Muslims constructed peace as central to Muslim identity and a common value of Muslims and non-Muslims that doesn't require rejection of all forms of violence, such as defensive violence (Kilby, 2017). Kilby (2017) argues that peace is

used as a resource to challenge the mainstream UK terrorism discourse, which is the association of adherence to Islam with the threat of terror attacks. Another example points out the dynamic relations between identities, activities, and constructions: peace activists provide clear representations of peace, emphasizing its dynamic structure compared to non-activists; they also represent conflict as normal, not exclusively negative, and war as a concrete fact that can be tackled (Sarrica & Contarello, 2004). They argue that when these meanings are constructed within the groups, they form the basis of their activist identity and their activities.

In addition to political constructions of the concept of peace, peace processes and peace agreements are constructed differently among the public and politicians. For instance, Montiel and de Guzman (2011) demonstrated that the peace agreement in the Philippines is discussed in terms of the constitutionality of the agreement among the political elites, while the public has been more concerned about participatory processes and public consultations. Similarly, while citizens represented peace as contingent on changes in socio-economic life, politicians used the promise of peace to “shape the realm of possibilities for citizens’ actions now and in the future” in the Colombian peace process (McFee, 2016, p. 22). The findings of these studies highlight the fact that peace processes and peace agreements are indeed proposals for change; accordingly, social change becomes an integral part of them (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Kelman, 2004). The discrepancies in representations of peace processes are in fact due to the struggle to make a peace process or agreement fit to their expectations by shaping mutual expectations within a collective (Elchereth et al., 2011). As representations exist in relational encounters with others and interaction with others creates debate and dialogue, representations are contested and renegotiated (Howarth, 2006; Jovchelovitch, 2007); that is, they are always subject to change.

In light of these theoretical considerations, it becomes essential to investigate how constructions of peace change as a peace process continues over time, since peace processes are indeed transition periods. Constructions of peace may change as they encounter other constructions; they may be changed to increase their persuasiveness. They are adapted to changing realities, since peace is constructed in order to create support for, or resistance to, the political agenda of the peace process. In this chapter, I aim to investigate how peace is constructed in different phases of the peace/resolution process of Turkey and its discursive functions. By doing so, I aim to enable an understanding of how constructions of peace change or remain the same as they encounter a variety of constructions as well as changes in physical realities such as a crisis in the process. This analysis might reveal how the idea is introduced in the beginning phase as the reality of peace becomes closer in a peace process and how it is used to mobilize a variety of reactions. For instance, Kelman (2007) argues that movement toward peace elicits a variety of reactions in society, such as approach and avoidance, and it is essential to look for mobilization strategies for these various reactions. Moreover, the present study might also unfold how the constructions of peace are adapted to the crisis phase of the peace process, and how the idea of peace becomes more concrete and mobilization of reactions is secured in the development phase. Taking into consideration the progress of the peace process over time, I aim to address change in constructions of peace, in particular how (discursive strategies) and why (discursive functions) constructions of peace change.

To his end, I investigate how peace is constructed during different phases of the peace process in media in Turkey and discursive functions of these constructions. I start with a quantitative analysis of uses of the word ‘peace’, continue with qualitative analysis of its usage, and conclude with a network analysis of its relations with other concepts. These analyses are guided by the

following questions, respectively.

- Is there any significant difference in the number of times the word ‘peace’ is used among two groups of newspapers and in different phases of the peace process?
- How is peace constructed through its collocates in the two groups of newspapers in different phases of the peace process? What are the discursive functions of these constructions?
- How do constructions of peace change as the peace process continues over time?
- How is the concept of peace related to other concepts in the two groups of newspapers in different phases of the peace process?

Newspaper articles are chosen for analysis in this study, as the media are a platform on which discursive struggles over ideas take place and are disseminated (Jensen & Wagoner, 2012). It is planned to perform a synchronic comparison between two groups of newspapers as well as to investigate the diachronic variation within these groups. To achieve the aims of the study, a corpus linguistics methodology and text network analysis are utilized in three different analyses. While corpus linguistics methods help analyse large amounts of natural data to be able to observe variances and meaning constructions in real-life discourses, text network analysis helps observe relations between concepts that form discourses. The first analysis consists of a quantitative comparison of occurrences of the word ‘peace’ in two groups of media in different phases of the peace process to get a brief view of the data. The second analysis consists of an examination of collocates of ‘peace’ by using corpus linguistics methods in order to understand meanings of peace and their discursive functions. The third analysis consists of network analysis of collocates of ‘peace’ in order to observe relational contexts in which the concept of peace exists. The following section describes the data and the analytical procedures used.

## ***Data and methods***

### *Newspapers*

In order to include newspapers that reflect a diversity of political positions in the media of Turkey, I chose five ideologically different daily newspapers by considering the media studies literature in Turkey (Carkoğlu & Yavuz, 2011; Kaya & Çakmur, 2010; Open Source Center, 2008) (see Table 2. 1). The newspapers are combined into two groups to be able to conduct meaningful comparisons. The news articles from the Hürriyet, Sabah, and Sözcü newspapers make up one group, called ‘Turkish media’ (TR media). The news articles from the Özgür Gündem and Evrensel newspapers constitute the other group, called ‘pro Kurdish Movement<sup>1</sup> media’ (KR media)

Table 2. 1 The sample of newspapers

Groups	Newspaper	Ownership	Political stance	Circulation*
Turkish Media	Hürriyet	Doğan Media Group	Pro-state	339,000
	Sabah	Turkuaz Group	Pro-government	306,000
	Sözcü	Estetik publication	Kemalist nationalism	289,000
Pro-Kurdish Movement Media	Özgür Gündem	Ersin Press Publication	Pro-Kurdish movement	7303
	Evrensel	Bülten Press Publication	Left-wing	5754

\* The circulation information is retrieved from MedyaTava (2016).

### *Corpus building*

I specified eight important events in the peace process by asking six academics and one journalist who work on the subject. These events cover the two-year period of the peace process from 2013 to 2015. Then I grouped these events in a way that reflected the different phases of

<sup>1</sup> Kurdish movement is a term used by Kurdish politicians to describe the organizations, parties, and people that work to proclaim the demands and needs of Kurdish people.

the peace process: the first five events are categorized as the beginning phase of the process. The articles about the Kobane protests are treated separately and called ‘the crisis in the process’. The last two events are categorized as the development phase of the process after the crisis.

**The beginning phase – 2013:**

- 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013: Call for withdrawal of the PKK militants from Turkey in the Newroz celebration in Diyarbakir
- 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013: The Wise People Commission’s meeting with the prime minister
- 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2013: The democratization package consisting of law proposals
- 6<sup>th</sup> June 2014: The Resolution Process Conference by the ministers of the AKP
- 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014: A law change that legitimizes the peace process

**The crisis in the process – 2014:**

- 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> Oct 2014: A crisis: Protests against the siege of Kobane by Islamic State (IS)

**The development phase – 2015:**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2014: Öcalan’s draft for the peace process is announced
- 28<sup>th</sup> Feb 2015: A joint press conference of the members of the AKP and the HDP (Dolmabahçe Agreement): Declaration of negotiation items and call to leave behind the guns

I collected the newspaper articles about these events for the day they occurred and the following three days from the online archives of these newspapers. In all, the corpus has 611 articles consisting of 318,788 words (see Table 2. 2); it is an example of a small, purpose-built corpus to investigate specific research questions (Mautner, 2016).

Table 2. 2 Number of news articles and words analysed

Beginning of the process – 2013	Crisis in the process – 2014	Development of the process – 2015	Total
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Pro-Kurdish Movement (KR) media corpus	134 articles, 72,863 words	58 articles, 32,881 words	46 articles, 30,890 words	238 articles, 136,634 words
Turkish (TR) media corpus	222 articles, 101,765 words	67 articles, 28,833 words	84 articles, 51,556 words	373 articles, 182,154 words
Total	356 articles, 174,628 words	125 articles, 61,714 words	130 articles, 82,446 words	611 articles, 318,788 words

For the purpose of this study, the word ‘peace’ is chosen as the focus. In the first stage of the analysis, occurrences of the lemma<sup>2</sup> peace\* are analysed by comparing their relative frequencies within two groups of media and across different phases of the process. Then, collocates (words that occur next to or near each other more often than if the words are randomly ordered in a text) of ‘peace’ are investigated by using the corpus analysis tool AntConc (Anthony, 2014). Each joint occurrence of the word ‘peace’ and its collocates has been examined and categorized to create themes; since the meaning of a word in context is created through its collocates (Stubbs, 2001). Lastly, collocates of ‘peace’ and four other concepts of the peace process (democracy, Kurd, Turk, and Turkey) (Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017; Yegen, 2009) are used to form a network and to observe meaning relations of the concept of peace. The analyses were conducted in Turkish, but the examples from the data are translated into English. It is important to note that function words (or stop words) – words that are very frequently used to bind a text together but do not specifically contribute to the content, such as pronouns, prepositions, and conjunctions (Stubbs, 2001) – are removed from the collocation lists. The Turkish stop words list generated by Can et al. (2008) is used in this process.

<sup>2</sup> The symbol \* acts as a wild card for any series of letters in the software and indicates that all forms that contain ‘peace’ are searched.



## Findings

### *The Quantitative analysis of the uses of the word 'peace'*

In order to examine whether there are any significant differences in frequencies of the word 'peace' among the two groups of newspapers and in the different phases of the peace process, I used an online log-likelihood and effect size calculator (UCREL, 2013) to compare relative frequencies of the lemma peace\*. In Table 2. 3, the log-likelihood comparisons of the relative frequencies of the term peace\* demonstrate statistically significant differences between the KR media and the TR media. While the term peace\* occurred more in the KR media than the TR media during the beginning phase of the process, it occurred slightly less in the KR media than in the TR media during the crisis in the process in 2014. There was no difference in the occurrence of peace\* between the two corpora in the development phase of the process.

Table 2. 3 Comparison of the lemma peace\* between the KR and TR media corpora

		KR Media		TR Media		% difference	LL of difference
		Raw	%	Raw	%		
Peace*	Beginning – 2013	449	0.62	282	0.28	+0.34	114.59 <sub>a</sub>
	Crisis – 2014	41	0.12	54	0.19	-0.07	3.90 <sub>b</sub>
	Development – 2015	123	0.40	167	0.32	0.08	2.98

<sub>a</sub>p<0.0001, <sub>b</sub>p<0.05

I also compared the relative frequencies of the term peace\* across different phases of the peace process within the corpora. The log-likelihood comparisons of the relative frequencies of the term peace\* reveal statistically significant differences between the beginning phase (rel. fre. = 0.62) and the development phase (rel. fre. = 0.40) of the peace process in the KR media (% difference = -0.22, LL of difference = 19.92, p<0.0001), whereas the relative frequency of

peace\* remained unchanged in the TR media from the beginning phase (rel. fre. = 0.28) to the development phase (rel.fre. = 0.32) (% difference = 0.4, LL of difference = 2.52, p = n.s).

The analyses indicate the quantitative differences between the two corpora and the decline in the occurrences of peace\* in the KR media from the beginning phase to the development phase of the peace process. These comparisons reveal the existence of differences between the two groups of media and the different phases of the peace process and justify the need to examine the content of these differences. In order to do that, the occurrences of ‘peace’ are investigated to reveal their meanings and discursive functions in the peace process via the analysis of the collocates of ‘peace’.

#### *The Qualitative analysis of the uses of the word ‘peace’*

While scrutinizing how ‘peace’ is constructed through its collocates, I also look at how the collocates of the lemma peace\* differ between the KR media and the TR media as well as between the different phases of the peace process. Collocates of a word influence its meaning (Stubbs, 2001). Examining concordance lines<sup>3</sup> of joint occurrences of a word and its collocates helps to identify patterns and then these patterns are related to the contexts in which the texts are produced and received (Mautner, 2016). I used the t-score (a measure that captures the certainty of collocation, which means that the co-occurrence of two words is higher than random probability) method of AntConc to calculate collocation with a span of five words either side of the node and a minimum of three joint occurrences. Further analyses of collocations (examination of concordance lines) are limited to the top 10 collocations because of practicalities.

<sup>3</sup> Concordance lines are a table of all occurrences of a word in a corpus with its immediate context.

## Peace in the beginning phase

Table 2. 4 The top 10 collocates of the lemma peace\* in the beginning phase, 2013, in the KR media and TR media

	KR media	Freq. as collocate	t-score	TR media	Freq. as collocate	t-score
1.	Democratic	43	6.539	Resolution	24	4.781
2.	Turkey	40	6.299	Societal	20	4.449
3.	Kurd(ish)	38	6.132	Peace	20	4.392
4.	Resolution	28	5.276	Turkey	19	4.072
5.	Democracy	25	4.989	Kurd(ish)	17	4.019
6.	Newroz	25	4.970	Process (of)	14	3.635
7.	Öcalan	23	4.737	Said	13	3.453
8.	Peace	21	4.558	Saying	12	3.436
9.	All	19	4.345	Öcalan	13	3.418
10.	Societal	16	3.995	Nevruz	12	3.327

In the KR media from the beginning phase in 2013, the lemma peace\* co-occurs with the words ‘democratic’ and ‘democracy’ while ‘democracy’ and ‘democratic’ are not among the top 10 collocates of peace\* in the TR media corpus from the beginning phase. First, I will look in detail at constructions of ‘peace’ in the KR media; the collocates ‘democracy’ and ‘democratic’ help to define the political policy of peacebuilding and a state of peace. Peace and democracy are construed as interdependent.

Without peace, it is not possible to have tranquillity, fraternity, democracy, welfare, fair distribution of welfare, or producing together. (Özgür Gündem, 22.03.2013)

The statement above exemplifies a broad definition of peace that is more than the absence of conflict and linked to the social, cultural, and economic structures of life as tranquillity, welfare,

and fraternity are seen as contingent upon peace. Moreover, rules of democracy and participation of people are considered essential for defining and building peace. With this construction, the aim is to mobilize not only support but also active participation of people in the peace process.

Peace should be determined via democracy, via consensus considering the rules of democracy; peace should be considered a phenomenon in which everybody can get involved and participate. (Özgür Gündem, 27.06.2013).

Peace is constructed as being defined by peoples in Turkey according to their needs. Uses of the collocates Kurdish, Turkey, and ‘all’ (which is among the top 10 collocates only in the KR media) express people’s desire for peace as well as how peace is beneficial for them. To illustrate this, in the extract below, the peace process is introduced in terms of economic and political elements of labour and its benefits for workers.

Peaceful resolution is very important for all workers in Turkey. The most democratic demands have been disregarded because of the oppressive, militarist, and security concepts that this war has shaped. ... This process is also important in demanding the democratic, economic, social, and political rights of the oppressed workers living in the metropolises of Turkey. That’s why the unions have important duties in this process. (Evrensel, 22.03.2013)

Moreover, the relation between democracy and peace sets the ground to evaluate the steps of the peace process in the KR media data. While the report of the Wise People Commission – Eastern Anatolia Region is considered as offering helpful suggestions for a resolution, the democratization package is viewed as not helpful for the resolution because the changes it proposes are not seen as being relevant and beneficial for the resolution and the democratization or as responding to the demands of Kurdish people, as the extract below illustrates.

From the perspective of the democratic and peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question and democracy and freedoms, the content of the (democratization) package is empty. (Özgür Gündem, 01.10.2013)

In addition to the elaborations about the definition and benefits of the peace process serving to mobilize support, another way of mobilizing support is used, that is, projecting desire for peace onto people. Projection is used here in its broadest definition, that is, externalization of an internal process (Freud, 1917). For instance, in the statement below, Kurdish women's Newroz participation is used to project desire for peace as well as responsibility for the process onto the women.

Kurdish women, by walking in the front line of millions of people, showed that they are the pioneers of democratic peace, freedom, and equality. (Özgür Gündem, 23.03.2013)

In the TR media data, the collocates highlight the benefits and conditions of peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question. For instance, the extract below demonstrates the way the peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question is linked to the process of making Turkey stronger.

A new society is being constructed with Turks, Kurds, Laz, Armenians, Greeks, and all other identities.

This construction process will improve a lot when the Kurdish question is resolved peacefully. In order to become a strong state in the world today, it is required to be a strong society. (Sabah, 09.06.2014)

Projecting desire for peace onto the public in order to mobilize support is frequently used with various collocations in the TR media. For instance, the collocate 'saying' occurred because of repetitions of the sentence below from Öcalan's letter that projects desire for peace onto people.

Millions (of people) are saying peace, saying fraternity, and demanding resolution. (Sabah, 21.03.2013)

In addition to the collocate 'saying' (which is among the top 10 collocates only in the TR media), the collocates 'societal' and 'Turkey' express the projection of desire for peace onto the public as well. The common-sense view of peace as a common wish (Galtung, 1969) is used to create this projection. It is important to note here that projection also performs a defensive function that protects against criticism (Freud, 1917). Hence, projection as a defensive mechanism common in

both normal and pathological mental life as identified by Freud has emerged as a discursive strategy in this study.

Any step that would strengthen our internal peace and societal unity is the biggest wish of our nation.  
(Hürriyet, 30.09.2013)

The peoples of the region and Turkey demand peace from us, Turkey wants us to resolve this issue. (Sabah, 07.06.2014)

The extracts above are akin to Reicher and Hopkins's (2001) argument that politicians position themselves as speaking for people while trying to mobilize people for their own interests.

In contrast to the KR media, in the TR media data expressions of opposition to the peace process articulated by the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) become visible. However, in the discourse of the opposition, uses of the concepts of peace and resolution in the peace process are seen as traps set by terrorists.

The terrorists have seized the initiative, they have expanded their space with traps of resolution, process, peace, ceasefire, bargain, and concessions. (Sözcü, 23.03.2013)

In addition to the voices of the MHP, elaborations of the Wise People Commission also become noticeable in the TR media corpus. For instance, in the extract below, a member of the commission constructs peace as a societal project for a pluralistic democratic system while linking the Gezi Park protests to the peace process.

But for us, the events taking place in Taksim (Gezi Park protests) are also related to the peace process.  
Peace does not only mean silencing guns, but should be understood as a general societal project and goal.  
We see the work for peace as work for a pluralistic democratic system, aiming for the elimination of violence from every aspect of society. (Hürriyet, 26.06.2013)

In the TR media corpus, the collocate 'said' demonstrates an important aspect of the data, that is, an excessive amount of direct quotations. Although various voices including opposition ones contribute to constructions of peace, they might make the notion of peace difficult to

comprehend for people. However, projection of the desire for peace onto people occurs frequently, and it can be argued that the general idea of peace is used to mobilize support and to make the peace process familiar to people. In doing so, approach reactions, and a tendency to embrace the peace process with enthusiasm and hope (Kelman, 2007), are encouraged.

#### Peace in the crisis phase

Table 2. 5 The top collocates of the lemma peace\* in the crisis in 2014 in the KR and TR media

	Kurdish media	Freq. as collocate	t-score	Turkish media	Freq. as collocate	t-score
1.	Threat	8	2.822	Turkey	14	3.719
2.	Within/in	7	2.633	Process of	7	2.641
3.	Fraternity	6	2.446	To destroy	6	2.448
4.	Turkish	5	2.222	Within/in	6	2.444
5.				Resolution	6	2.439
6.				Societal	5	2.234
7.				Chp	5	2.229

The Kobane protests became the first topic of news at that time and the AKP government and the Kurdish movement discussed the boundaries of the peace process with regard to the Kobane siege and the protests, which is why it is considered a crisis in the peace process. Uses of the word ‘peace’ expressed how the protests were linked to the peace process. That’s why the lemma peace\* occurred relatively less during the Kobane crisis than in the other phases of the peace process (occurring 41 times in KR media data and 54 times in TR media). Consequently, the lemma peace\* has four collocates that have t-scores higher than 2 (which is considered a threshold by Stubbs, 1995) in KR media while it has seven collocates higher than 2 in TR media.

In the KR media, the collocates ‘in’ and ‘fraternity’ express the motto of the protests stated by the unions as “the will to struggle to live in peace and fraternity”. Similarly, to the beginning phase in the KR media, the state of peace is related to an equal, free, and democratic country.

The politics that make peoples enemies also harm workers, so that workers speak out against those politics and call for a struggle to live in peace and fraternity in an equal, free, and democratic country. (Evrensel, 09.10.2014).

As the peace process is linked to the war going on in Syria through the protests, it is seen as an international approach to interpret events happening in other countries as well. However, these protests are considered a threat to the peace process by Turkish media. The collocates ‘threat’ and ‘Turkish’ express criticism about the framing of the events in the Turkish media, as the extract below exemplifies.

The mainstream media who don’t see the response of the police and civilians to the Kobane protests happening all around Turkey reported the public reaction as a “Trap” and “Threat to Peace” in the headlines. (Evrensel, 08.10.2014).

Since the protests are construed as part of the struggle to live in peace and fraternity in the KR media data, the framing of the Turkish media is considered a distortion in the KR media, as the title of the news article from Evrensel exemplifies: “They reported the protests against war as a ‘Threat to Peace’”.

In TR media data, the collocates ‘Turkey’ and ‘to destroy’ express warnings raised by the ministers from the government not to destroy peace and stability in Turkey as the extract below illustrates.

No one has the right to destroy peace and stability in Turkey by using an incident taking place outside of Turkey. Moreover, no one has the right to stop the efforts to bury the guns in Turkey and to obtain peace completely. (Sabah, 08.10.2014)



In the extract, the peace process is construed as not an international issue but a domestic one, and the concept of peace is linked to the absence of guns. The concept of peace remains vague as there are both statements arguing it already exists in the country and statements arguing it will be achieved completely by burying the guns with the resolution process. This implies that society is largely fine, and the end of violence would bring in peace completely.

The collocates ‘Chp’ and ‘societal’ express the CHP leader’s criticism of the government regarding the peace process and his suggestion of a new way to stabilize the societal peace.

Regarding the subject of building our internal peace again, now it has been realized that the resolution process is a practice of the AKP to distract Kurdish citizens until they make their own expansionist dreams real. In this period when societal peace is in danger, the CHP will fulfil its responsibility of taking the resolution framework to the assembly, so that it is pluralist and no one is being cheated. (Hürriyet, 09.10.2014)

While expressing mistrust of the government, the CHP emphasizes the role of honesty and sincerity in peacebuilding and embracing the pluralist perspective. The emphasis on these aspects helps to construct a way of peacebuilding and a basis for evaluating the peace process. The KR media and the TR media data represent completely different discourses about the Kobane protests and the concept of peace during the crisis. While the KR media extends the construction of peace with an international approach, the TR media emphasizes the absence of guns.

#### Peace in the development phase

Table 2. 6 The top 10 collocates of the lemma peace\* in the development phase in 2015 in the KR media and TR media

	Kurdish media	Freq. as collocate	t-score	Turkish media	Freq. as collocate	t-score
1.	Democratic	27	5.186	Democratic	22	4.603
2.	Demirtaş	14	3.736	Gun	16	3.889

3.	Öcalan	13	3.592	Resolution	16	3.856
4.	Historical	11	3.311	Turkey	16	3.824
5.	Process (of)	11	3.308	Stable	14	3.733
6.	Stable	10	3.160	Years	13	3.584
7.	Democracy	10	3.157	Guns (of)	12	3.433
8.	Draft (of)	9	2.998	In the shadows (of)	10	3.158
9.	Negotiation	9	2.990	Peace	10	3.104
10.	Not	8	2.823	Pkk	11	3.084

In the development phase, ‘democratic’ is the most frequent collocate of the lemma peace\* in both KR and TR media, because the draft for negotiations is named the Draft for the Peace and Democratic Negotiation Process. It can be argued that the link between peace and democracy became more visible.

In KR media data, the collocates ‘democracy’ and ‘stable’ are used to highlight the fact that democracy and stable peace are the ultimate goals of the peace process. Legal assurances are seen as conditions of reaching these goals. Changes regarding equality and justice, as well as the recognition and inclusion of previously excluded groups, are mentioned as policies of the state of peace.

Unless the link between resolution, peace, and universal democracy is formed in a healthy manner, the democratic peace that we are trying to build to create pro-equality, pro-justice, and pro-peoples transformations in the structures of the state and the society cannot be expected. For that, the peace process should develop with all excluded groups whose existence is denied and excluded throughout the history of the republic; they should take part in the new system as themselves, being free and recognized equally. (Özgür Gündem, 28.02.2015)

Moreover, the collocate ‘historical’ is used to construe the draft and the call to the PKK to hold a congress to discuss disarmament as having historical importance, positioning Turkey ‘closer to peace than ever’. The draft is considered to be a framework for the negotiations; implementation of the draft, making the legal regulations in accordance with its suggestions, is seen as the next step of the peace process as well as essential to achieve democracy and stable peace.

Legal assurances are required for the stages after it [the Dolmabahçe Agreement] and without them it is not possible to reach the ultimate goal of peace and democracy. (Evrensel, 01.12.2014)

The elaborations about the state of peace are used to highlight the necessities of the peace process. It can be argued that emphasizing that otherwise it wouldn’t be possible to build peace elicits apprehension. Specifically, Demirtaş’s criticism of the AKP government in the extract below evokes apprehension, as the collocate ‘Demirtaş’ indicates that Demirtaş becomes an actor in the process.

Selahattin Demirtaş said that “In the walk for peace, the point that we couldn’t agree with the government is that they (the government) want to sell the dream of peace, we want to present real peace to our peoples”. (Evrensel, 03.03.2015)

Demirtaş argues that the AKP government sells the dream of peace instead of trying to build peace. The phrase ‘selling the dream of peace’ seems akin to McFee’s (2016) finding that politicians use the promise of peace to shape a realm of possibilities for citizens. In the TR media data, disarmament is presented as the most important characteristic of peace construction. The collocates ‘gun’, ‘guns’, ‘in the shadows’, and ‘PKK’ express an argument that in order to make peace the PKK should leave behind the guns. This argument is highlighted and repeated many times, however it contradicts the expectation that the legal regulations should be made first to progress the peace process in the KR media.

There can’t be peace under the shadows of guns. The first condition of peace is the PKK’s leaving behind guns. (Sabah, 28.02.2015)

The benefits of the peace process, and the efforts and support for it, are expressed as well through the use of the collocates ‘Turkey’ and ‘resolution’ in order to mobilize more support for the peace process. For instance, in the extract below, the interview with a layperson and his construction of peace are used to exemplify the support for the peace process.

Kaplan, who mentions that they support the call to leave behind their guns, also said: “Peace means tranquillity, peace means jobs, food, and hope. The call to leave behind the guns would have important consequences not only for our region but also for our country.” (Hürriyet, 03.03.2015)

Moreover, the silence of liberals and socialists is interpreted as not supporting. Given their support for peace and dialogue for years, their silence is questioned in the extract below. It indicates the importance given to receiving public support.

Liberals and socialists who kept on saying resolution, peace, dialogue, living together, and fraternity for years have ignored the historical step towards peace that took place today. (Sabah, 28.02.2015)

Similarly to the beginning phase in 2013, the TR media consists of opposition arguments raised by the MHP. The opposition discourse uses the same collocates ‘democratic’, ‘gun’, ‘resolution’, ‘Turkey’, ‘stable’, and ‘years’ that are used in the statements of the Dolmabahçe Agreement. However, in the discourse of the opposition they are said to denounce the agreement and to argue that these concepts are just nice-sounding rhetoric and don’t correspond to what the PKK and the AKP aim to do. The Treaty of Sèvres is called upon as an example to strengthen the argument that the peace process is harmful for the country.

They say peace would come and pave the way for democratic politics. I would like to say that the Treaty of Sèvres was called peace too, but it was obvious to everyone that it would have created hell for the Turkish nation. The treasonous text of the 10 items (the Dolmabahçe Agreement) that the Imrali monster (Öcalan) prepared and the gang of Kandil (the PKK) approved is a document on the collapse of the Republic of Turkey and a declaration of denial of its existence. (Hürriyet, 03.03.2015)

Moreover, concerns about the peace process exist in TR media data as well. The extract below raises the concern that initiations for stable peace might be turned into an initiation for elections; this concern corresponds to the argument about selling the dream of peace in the KR media.

We wish that the initiations for stable peace will not be turned into an initiation for elections by the AKP.

(Hürriyet 01.03.2015)

In TR media data, the emphasis on disarmament clarified the construction of peace. The optimistic atmosphere created in the beginning phase in 2013 is replaced by the controversies regarding the procedure of the peace process. With these controversies differences in the peace construction in the two media groups became clearer. The examination of concordance lines of the peace collocations demonstrated constructions of peace in different phases of the peace process. The following section complements the collocation analysis with the network relations of the collocates of peace.

#### *The relations of peace with other concepts: Collocation networks*

Although the collocation analysis together with the examination of concordance lines provided constructions of peace, it is important to investigate how the concept of peace is related to the other concepts. As collocation analysis addresses pairwise relations, collocation networks would be appropriate to look at these relations. Collocation networks have the potential to provide more insight into the meaning construction and semantic structure of a corpus by revealing relationships between multiple words (Baker, 2016; Brezina, McEnery, & Wattam, 2015). The network analysis presents meaning relations among data. It might help to understand how the notion of peace is related to other concepts and whether it is the main focus of the peace process. To be able to see the relational network of the notion of peace in different phases of the peace process, I established collocational networks from the collocates of the five nodes: peace, democracy, Turk, Kurd, and Turkey. The words ‘Turk’, ‘Kurd’, and ‘Turkey’ are chosen for the

analysis because identity claims are essential aspects of the Kurdish question, as Yegen (2009) argues that the public image and citizenship status of Kurds have transformed from prospective Turks to ‘pseudo-citizens’ and this change may accompany discriminatory practices. Moreover, Uluğ and Cohrs (2017) argue that the notion of democracy is associated with the Kurdish question both by politicians and other social actors. Hence, it is required to address the issues regarding identity and democracy and investigate the relation of these concepts with each other and peace during the peace process. The network analysis is limited to these five words and their collocates since collocates of each node are identified separately. The data from the crisis phase are omitted from the analysis because there are not enough data to create meaningful networks. In order to translate the textual data into a text network, collocations of the five nodes (peace,<sup>4</sup> democracy, Kurd, Turk, and Turkey) are explored by using the t-score measure of AntConc with a span of five words either side of the node and a minimum joint occurrence of three. In these network analyses, collocation relations consist of links between nodes (also called ‘edges’); collocation scores are used to indicate the strength of the relation, so the collocation scores are used in forming networks as representing edge weight parameters.

In order to form networks, I used Gephi graph visualization and analysis software (Bastian, Heymann, & Jacomy, 2009). Taking into consideration the size of the data (number of nodes ranging from 45 to 68), the ForceAtlas2 layout is chosen to produce a readable representation of the data. In the ForceAtlas2 layout, nodes repulse each other and edges attract their nodes, and hubs and clusters emerge accordingly (Jacomy, Venturini, Heymann, & Bastian, 2014). The parameters used for the ForceAtlas2 layout are determined by considering the suggestions of

<sup>4</sup> The collocates of peace are identified by not using the lemma form of ‘peace’, so that some collocates of ‘peace’ are different to the ones in the collocation analysis in the above section. Because using the lemma form would have required using lemma forms of the other concepts, it would have made it impossible to calculate reciprocal collocations used in the network analysis.

Jacomy et al. (2014), which are appropriate to the data size. The same parameters are used for all graphs since they are all similar small networks.

In order to create a more readable and meaningful image, I arranged the sizes of the nodes' labels according to their betweenness centrality. The betweenness centrality of a node is an indicator of "how often it appears between any two random nodes in the network" (Paranyushkin, 2011, p. 12), wherein a high score (bigger node labels in the graphs below; see Figure 2. 1) means more influence in the network. I arranged the sizes of the edges according to their weight. The thickness of the edge in the graph indicates the strength of the relation. It is important to note that collocations are directional, with arrowheads indicating the direction of association.

In the KR media beginning phase network (see Figure 2.1), 'Kurd' emerges as the most important junction for meaning circulation, followed by 'Turkey'. 'Kurd' and 'Turkey' become influential in creating the meaning relations within the network. While 'peace' has most connections with 'Kurd' and 'Turkey', it is related to 'democracy' and 'Turkey' more strongly than 'Kurd'. 'Peace' has less connection with 'Turk'. 'Turk' and 'democracy' are placed far from other concepts in the graph and exist as local hubs themselves. However, the links between 'Kurd' and 'peace' (the collocates 'democratic', 'freedom', 'Newroz', and 'Öcalan') highlight essential issues of the peace process since they are linked to the other nodes as well. The links between 'Turkey' and 'peace' (the collocates 'whole', 'call', 'democratization', and 'resolution') express benefits of the peace process.

Compared to the KR media beginning phase network, the TR media beginning phase network is more densely connected, with all key concepts (Turk, Turkey, Kurd, peace, and democracy) having similar scores of betweenness centrality and the nodes having more connections with each other. However, 'peace' does not have many connections with 'democracy', 'Kurd', and

‘Turk’. ‘Turkey’ is slightly more influential than the others in terms of meaning circulation, and ‘peace’ has most connections with ‘Turkey’ (the collocates ‘today’, ‘anymore’, and ‘resolution’), these connections express benefits of the peace process.

In the KR media development phase network, ‘Turkey’ and ‘Kurd’ emerge as important junctions for meaning circulation similarly to the KR media beginning phase network. However, ‘peace’ is far from other nodes and exists as a local hub compared to its place in the KR media beginning phase graph. Similarly, to the KR media beginning phase graph, it has most connections with ‘Kurd’, and the collocates ‘negotiation’, ‘historical’, ‘Öcalan’, and ‘Önder’ express the actors of the peace process as well its importance. The collocates ‘democratic’ and ‘new’ represent the link between ‘peace’ and ‘Turkey’.

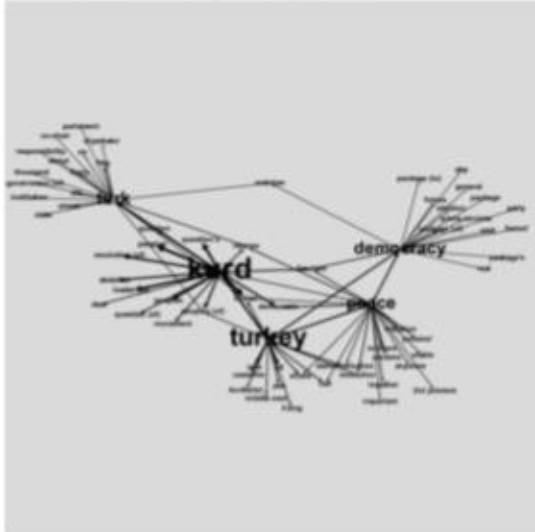
In the TR development media network, ‘Turkey’ and ‘peace’ emerge as important junctions for meaning circulation. Compared to the TR media beginning phase graph, ‘Turkey’ and ‘peace’ are placed close to each other. It can be argued that there is a structural gap (empty spaces between clusters of interconnected nodes) between the groups of nodes in the TR media development phase graph. The nodes ‘Turk’ and ‘Kurd’ are far from the nodes ‘democracy’, ‘peace’, and ‘Turkey’. The structural gap indicates the absence of relations between these concepts in discourses about the peace process. Compared to the TR media beginning phase graph, the relations between these concepts weakened, that is, they occurred together less frequently. ‘Turk’, ‘Kurd’, and ‘democracy’ emerge as separate local hubs. ‘Peace’ has the most connections with ‘Turkey’ (the collocates ‘Pkk’, ‘Akp’, and ‘gun’) that express the actors of the peace process. ‘Peace’ has two connections with ‘democracy’ (the collocates ‘resolution’ and ‘negotiation’).



The collocation networks provided the relations of the notion of peace with other concepts of the peace process as well as its places in the meaning structures of the corpora. It can be argued that in both media groups from the beginning phases to the development phases, the relations between the concepts lessened and the networks became less dense. It is important to note that this change may be due to the decrease in the corpora sizes. Moreover, the networks reveal that other concepts, such as Kurd and Turkey in the KR media and Turkey in the TR media, are equally important as the notion of peace in the peace process.

Figure 2.1 The collocation networks

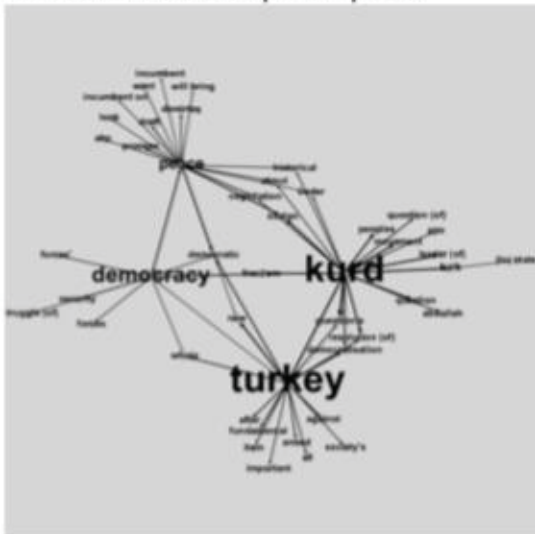
KR media the beginning phase



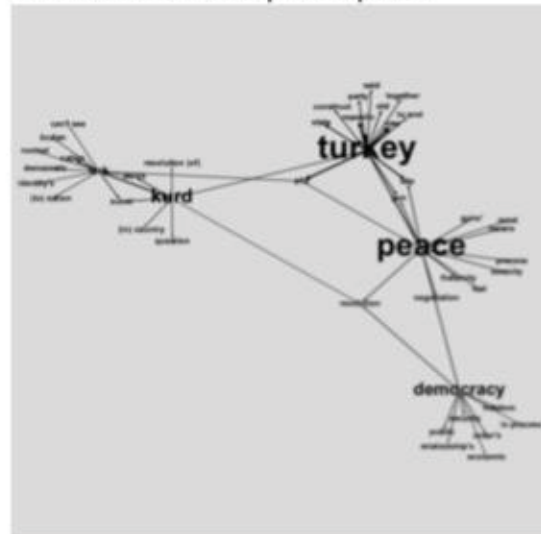
TR media the beginning phase



KR media the development phase



TR media the development phase



## Discussion

In this chapter, I tackled change in constructions of peace and how they are adapted to changing physical realities by considering other constructions as the peace/resolution process continued.

First, I demonstrated the significant differences in uses of the word ‘peace’ in two groups of media in different phases of the peace process with a comparison of the relative frequencies. Then I investigated constructions of peace by examining immediate contexts of peace collocates. In the KR media, peace is associated with democracy both for the process of peace-making and for the state of peace in the beginning phase, and this association is highlighted as a necessity in the development phase. An international approach is included in peace construction during the crisis. In the TR media, peace construction consists of various and sometimes contrasting views in the beginning phase and during the crisis; however, it is clarified with the emphasis on disarmament in the development phase. The view of peace as a common wish in the form of projecting a desire for peace onto people is used to make the peace process familiar and mobilize support for it in both media groups. However, as the peace process continues over time, mobilizations of potential reactions are reconfigured. In the development phase, while the criticisms of the AKP government and the controversies regarding the procedure of the peace process evoke apprehension regarding the future of the peace process in the KR media, expressing support for peace is considered extremely important as silence is seen as the absence of support in the TR media. Although I focused on the notion of peace in this study, it is also important to observe meaning relations in the contexts where peace occurs. Thereby, the collocation networks of peace demonstrated the dynamic and relational nature of knowledge. I illustrated how changing realities and knowledge about other constructions influence constructions of peace in the case of the peace/resolution process in Turkey. The emergence of the crisis in the process and awareness of discrepancies with other constructions created a symbolic encounter in which constructions are contested and adapted to make sense of changing realities by emphasizing the *sine qua non* of peace. The diachronic data set used in this study

clearly demonstrated that changing constructions of peace is indeed a struggle to make the process fit to expectations by shaping mutual expectations within a collective (Elcheroth et al., 2011).

Mobilization of public reactions is also part of the struggle, as they are adapted according to the changing realities and other constructions. In this study, projecting the desire for peace onto people has changed to evoking apprehension regarding the future of the peace process and insistence on the expression of support. The efforts for mobilizing support for the peace process indicate that a common-sense wish for peace does not necessarily turn into support for the peace process. This is in line with Kelman's (2007) elaborations that the peace process raises approach and avoidance tendencies within societies. Investigating peace constructions becomes crucial and necessary to deal with these tendencies and interpret the peace process. It may also reveal obstacles and barriers to the realization of a peace process (Gavriely-Nuri, 2010). In this study, disagreement over the sequencing of disarmament and legal regulations appears to be a barrier to progress of the peace process, similarly to what Yegen (2015) argued.

This study demonstrated the importance of investigating change in political constructions of peace that occurs during the peace process. In addition to various constructions among different groups and actors mentioned in the literature (e.g. McFee, 2016; Montiel & de Guzman, 2011), how these constructions change through encounters with each other and adapt to changing physical realities is presented. The focus on change, reasons for it, and its consequences deepen the understanding of particular political goals aimed at through uses of particular constructions of peace (Gavriely-Nuri, 2010; Gibson, 2011).

Moreover, this study is important in illustrating the use of the corpus linguistics methodology and text network analysis in the investigation of peace constructions. Furthermore, the three

different analyses enabled us to understand and explain better how peace is constructed by approaching the data from different angles and levels. While quantitative comparison pinpoints specific differences, in-depth analysis of collocations provides meanings of the notion of peace and its uses in the different phases of the peace process. The text network analysis helped in placing the notion of peace into contexts of meaning relations in the peace process and helped us observe how peace is related to other concepts in discourses about the peace process.

This study has limitations regarding the restrictions in the size of the data included in the collocation analysis and the network analysis. The examination of concordance lines of collocations is restricted to the top 10 collocates of ‘peace’ and only five specific nodes of interest and their collocations could be included in the network analysis; more data would have definitely enriched the analysis and our understanding of how the concept of peace is used in the peace/resolution process. For instance, peace and democracy are linked to each other in the pro-Kurdish movement media, investigation of constructions of democracy could have helped understand this relation better.

All in all, this study indicates that ‘peace’ does not have one, clear-cut, and stable meaning in the peace/resolution process of Turkey, rather it has fluid and plural and sometimes contradicting meanings that are adapted to changing realities. Therefore, it can be suggested that the question ‘What do you mean by peace?’ should be asked constantly to facilitate peace negotiations and mobilization of support for it.

Figure 2: KR media the beginning phase

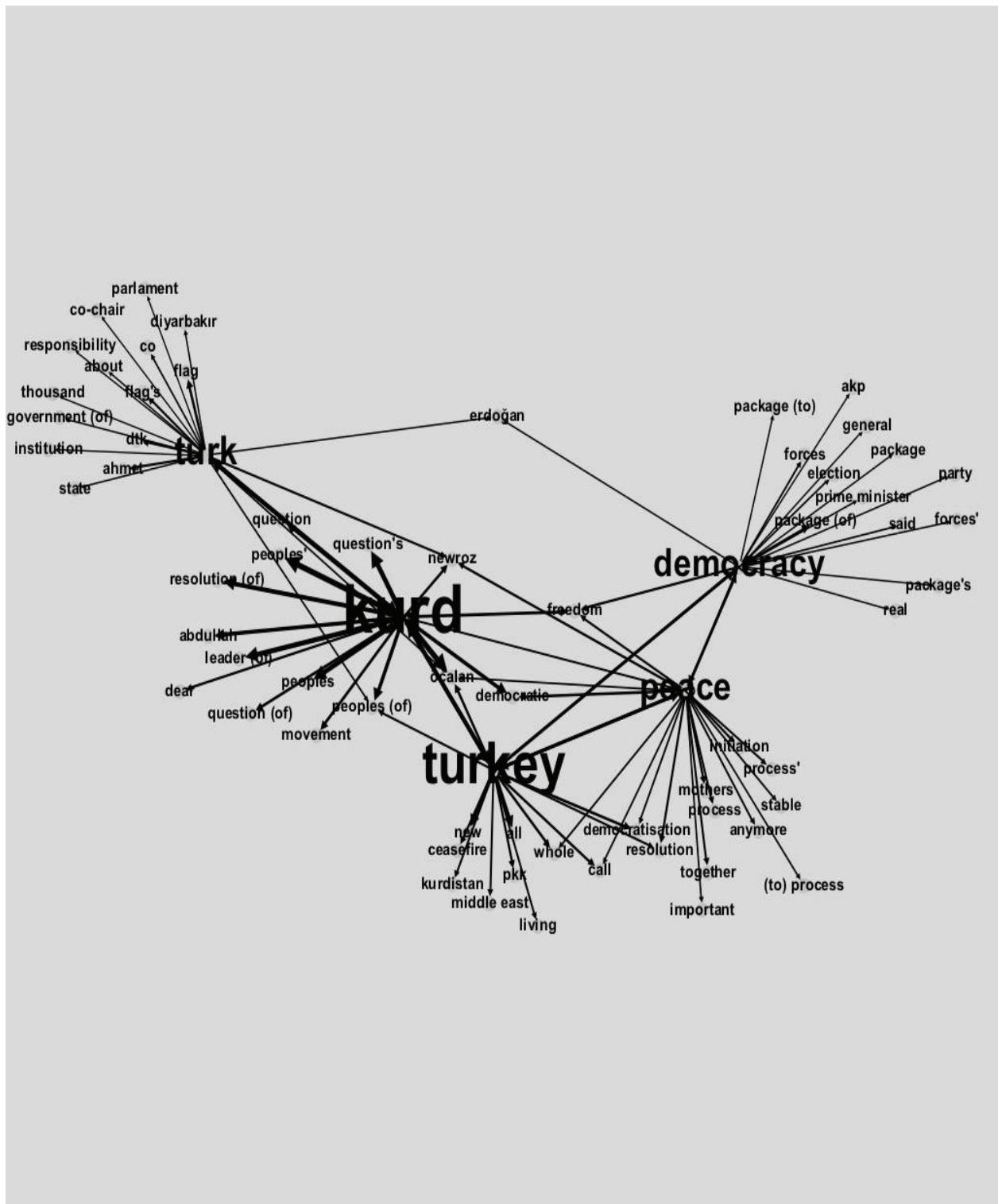


Figure 3: TR media the beginning phase

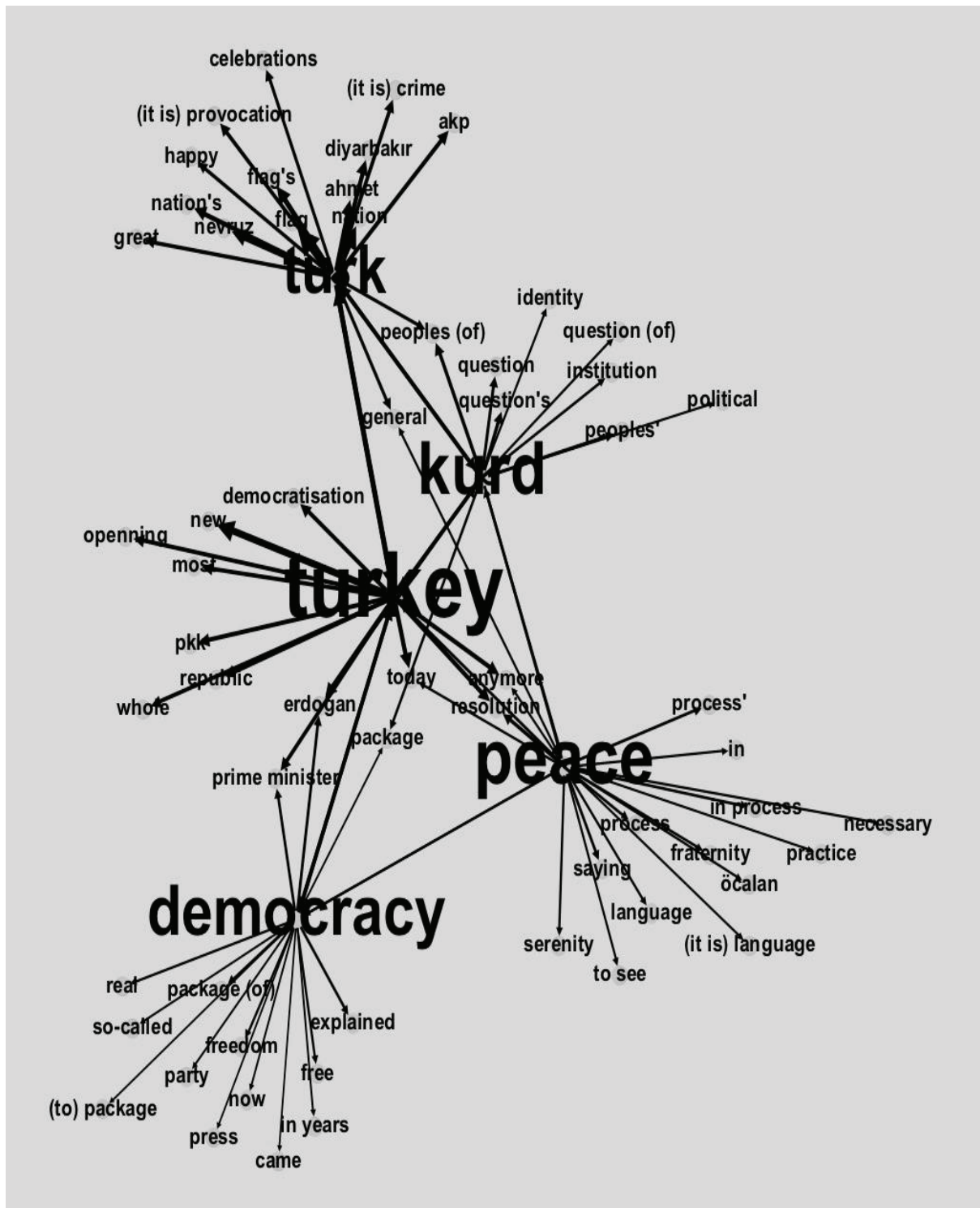
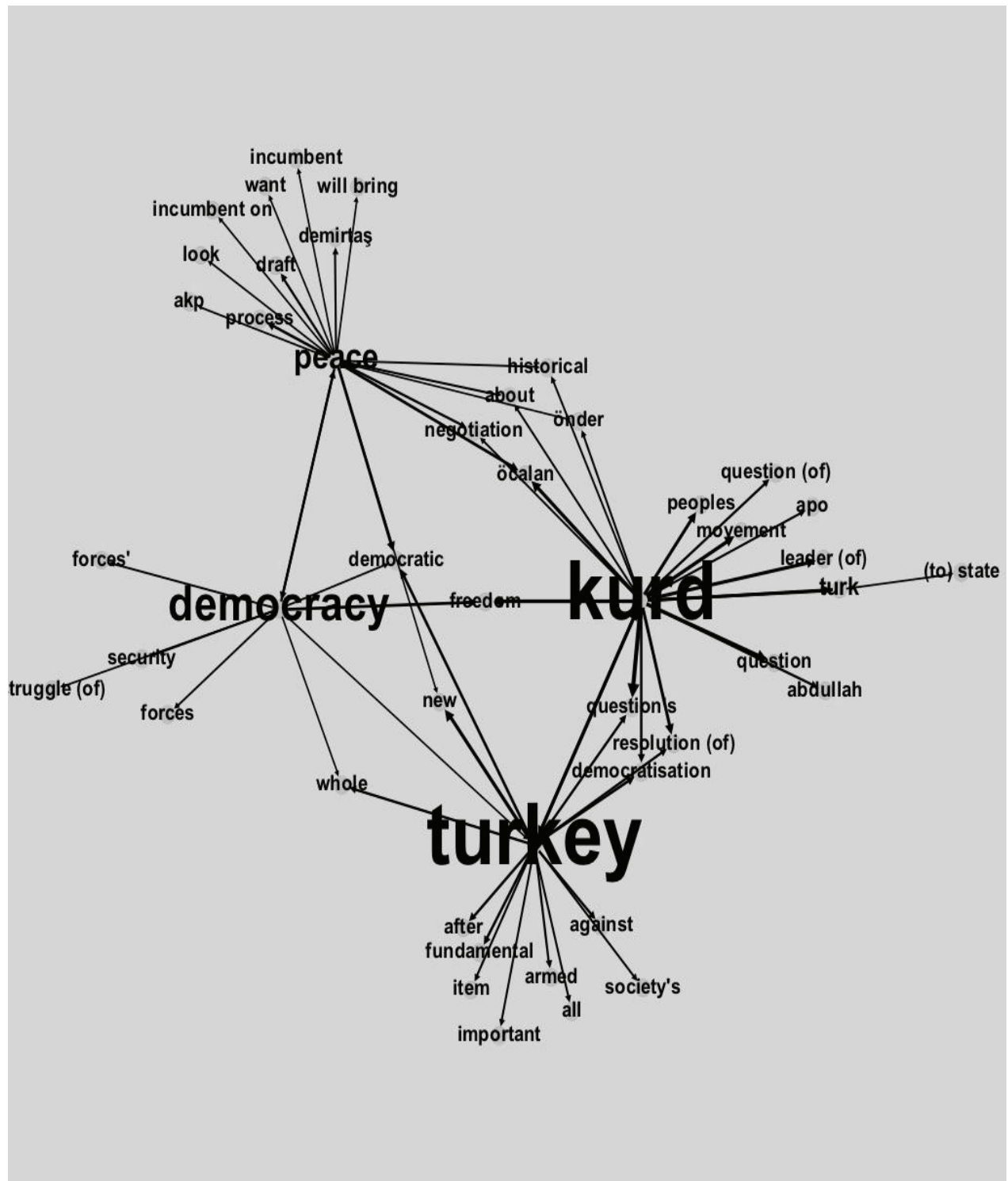




Figure 4: KR media in the development phase







## **Chapter 3**

### **Social representations of the peace/resolution process as reflected in the media**

Transforming systems of violence into more equitable and cooperative social systems requires systemic peacebuilding efforts at various levels in a society, including negotiations between leaders, changes in institutional systems, and changes in societal beliefs (Bar-Tal, 2009; Christie, 2006). Peacebuilding initiatives that aim to transform societies at these different levels have a reciprocal influence on each other, as they create various reactions in societies characterized by different positions regarding conflict (Kelman, 2007). Therefore, addressing the diversity of public understandings, the influences that create these diverse understandings as well as how this diversity is treated in the social and political context is considered necessary to better understand a move toward peace (Bar-Tal, 2006; Christie, 2006; Cohrs et al., 2015; Kelman, 2012; Wagoner, 2014). In this chapter, I aim to address these issues by looking at how the peace process in Turkey is constructed through the media. In particular, I investigate how different representations of the peace process are developed by different groups by using various categorizations, cultural resources, and argumentation strategies, and how these representations shape the social context to organize interaction with others' representations. I also examine whether by doing so they make the case for either supporting or opposing the peace/resolution process.

### ***Move from conflict toward peace through social representations***

Meaning-making processes of peace and conflict that involve social identity and intergroup processes have always been the concern of social psychology (Cohrs & Boehnke, 2008; Vollhardt & Bilali, 2008). However, meaning-making processes of the move from violent conflict toward peacebuilding are mostly studied in regard to the social-psychological factors that facilitate or obstruct peace-making (e.g. see Leidner, Tropp, & Lickel, 2013 for a review of psychological factors that facilitate conflict resolution; see Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011 for a model of socio-psychological barriers to peace-making). These approaches need to be complemented by holistic and contextual approaches to be able to address the complexity of the conflict reality and the diversity of its public understanding, as well as how this diversity may promote a move towards peace (Bar-Tal, 2006; Kelman, 2012). For instance, Kelman (2007) states that the formation of new attitudes regarding negotiations made it possible for negotiations to happen, even though they did not necessarily replace old attitudes, but rather developed alongside them during the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in the 1990s. Similarly, the breakdown of negotiations and continuation of conflict produced clashing narratives on each side, but did not wipe out the support for negotiating a peaceful compromise. In addition, Bar-Tal (2004) shows how, following the breakdown of the peace process in Israel, the conflict context and its public framing led society members to focus more on themselves in processing new information about the conflict, to reject criticism, and increase pressures towards conformity. However, he acknowledges the existence of great variations in how different groups make sense of, and react to, the same events. Hence, the diversity in public understandings and how it is treated in the social and political context become a central issue, because what makes social change possible is the articulation of alternative representations by contesting and negotiating the dominant

representations (Moscovici & Marková, 2000). In order to understand the dynamics and conditions of change – in this case, the peace process and move toward peace – it is crucial to investigate how social representations and social identities organize the social context in a way that society members can act upon it to change or maintain existing political structures and social relations (Elcheroth, Doise, & Reicher, 2011; Liu & Sibley, 2009). Thus, the questions of how people construct different shared representations of the same events, how they deal with others' representations, and how they coordinate their action and mobilize public support become crucial in understanding how change becomes possible and takes place in the move from conflict to peace (Wagoner, 2014).

To be able to address the diversity and complexity of public opinion, I draw on social representations theory (SRT; Moscovici, 1961/2008). The theory contributes to understanding how social groups make sense of an unfamiliar phenomenon by anchoring it to existing representations and how they develop their own interpretations of the unfamiliar phenomenon depending on their history, culture, and conditions (Wagner et al., 1999). As different social groups of unequal power symbolically interact about the object of representation, their representations of the same object compete in their claims to reality (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008; Howarth, 2006), like 'a battle of ideas' (Moscovici & Marková, 2000, p. 275). By the same token, the meeting of their representations in symbolic or real knowledge encounters presents opportunities for dialogue, debate, and conflict, as representations are contested and renegotiated in these encounters (Jovchelovitch, 2007). Through these encounters, representations of others can be limited and silenced or defended and reified (Howarth, 2006; Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2015). Thereby the relationship with the other is revisited, and the social order and the meaning systems it depends on are reproduced or transformed (Elcheroth et al., 2011;

Wagner et al., 1999). Thus, in order to understand the process of social change, it is essential to look at the interaction between the groups involved and how alternative representations might grow out of these interactions (Cornish, 2012).

To investigate the symbolic interactions between the different groups and representations, I focus on how social representations shape context (Moscovici & Marková, 2000) and take into account the conceptualization of context as something actively constructed, that is social, historical, dynamic, and ideological (Elcheroth & Reicher, 2014; Howarth et al., 2013). Individuals' active construction of context with a consideration of changing realities makes some ideas dominant and marginalizes others by either construing the context or making ideas fit the context better to mobilize support (Elcheroth & Reicher, 2014; Howarth et al., 2013; Jensen & Wagoner, 2012). For instance, Elcheroth and Reicher (2014) showed how Scottish politicians who were against the invasion of Iraq in 2003 shaped the argumentative and narrative aspects of the context to contest the dominant view that the invasion was necessary, which was promoted by the ruling parties during debates in the Scottish parliament. They generated more arguments, linked them to well-established narratives in society, and adapted their arguments to changing realities of the war to establish an alternative perspective and to challenge the status quo (Elcheroth & Reicher, 2014). Constructing the context is one of the ways in which people deal with the representations of others to increase the persuasiveness and viability of their own representations. Thereby, asking whether the context is more likely to allow for plurality than to simplify social reality helps in identifying the conditions that lead to conflict and the conditions that make change toward peace possible (Elcheroth & Spini, 2011).

### ***The Present research***

Based on this theoretical approach, in this study, I aim to understand meaning-making processes of the peace process. To do so, I ask (1) how the peace process is represented by different groups in Turkey as reflected in the media, (2) how these representations draw on various category constructions, cultural resources, and argumentation strategies, and (3) how the context is constructed and how representations of others are treated. These questions help us to interpret whether the potential change that the peace process would bring is being promoted or resisted. Although Toktamis (2015) argues that the peace process was not a genuine peace process but a shift from a security-coercion paradigm to a security-brotherhood paradigm (since the AKP government's actions in other areas did not coincide with the negotiations), it is important to understand how the peace process is signified, how existing different positions of the conflict (Uluğ & Cohrs, 2016) lose or gain favour in the discussion, and thereby open possibilities for resolving the conflict and for social change toward peace.

### ***Method***

#### ***Materials***

In order to investigate how the peace process is constructed by different groups and how these representations shape the context, I analysed media data extracted from different newspapers. As the media are one of the channels where intellectual and discursive struggles over ideas take place (Jensen & Wagoner, 2012), it is crucial in the reproduction and dissemination of social representations (Elcherath et al., 2011; Moscovici, 1961/2008). Even in conditions of low press freedom (e.g. Turkey's rank in terms of press freedom was 154<sup>th</sup> in 2013 and 2014 according to Reporters without Borders), it is important to investigate whether the media present different

views and develop their own views of the political phenomenon or only disseminate the views of the power holders.

The sampling involves two steps: selection of newspapers and selection of news articles. For newspapers, I aimed for a heterogeneous sample in terms of political position to be able to see different representations of the peace process. As regards the media studies literature in Turkey (Carkoğlu & Yavuz, 2011; Kaya & Çakmur, 2010; Open Source Center, 2008), I chose five newspapers that reflect a diversity of political positions in the Turkish media (see Table 3.1). According to circulation information reported by MedyaTava (2016), Hürriyet, Sabah, and Sözcü are among the most popular dailies in Turkey, Özgür Gündem was the most popular pro-Kurdish movement daily, and Evrensel is among the most popular left-wing dailies.

Table 3. 1 The newspaper sample

Newspaper	Ownership	Political stance	Circulation
Hürriyet	Doğan Media Group	Pro-state	339,000
Sabah	Turkuaz Group	Pro-government	306,000
Sözcü	Estetik Publication	Kemalist nationalism	289,000
Özgür Gündem	Ersin Press Publication	Pro-Kurdish movement	7303
Evrensel	Bülten Press Publication	Left-wing	5754

In order to choose texts to examine, I first classified the newspaper articles according to the events that they refer to. The three most important events of the peace process were determined

after a consultation with five academics working on the subject: The Newroz Celebration in Diyarbakir on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013, the Kobane Protests on 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> October 2014, and the Dolmabahçe Agreement on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2015. By focusing on these events, I include relevant and information-rich texts that cover the entire span of the peace process: how it started, was then endangered by the crisis, and progressed after the crisis. The longitudinal data set helps to focus on the representations in the making (Moscovici & Marková, 2000).

The sample consists of 34 articles published in the digital versions of the newspapers, five to eight from each newspaper and seven to fourteen for each event (see the appendix for the title and the links of the news articles). The articles consist of primary reports on the events, politicians' speeches about the events, and news analyses.

### *Analysis*

I draw on critical discourse analysis, Wodak and Meyer's (2001) Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), and van Dijk's (1988) analytical categories about genre-specific features of newspaper articles to guide the analysis. The approach of discourse studies to language use as a social practice, and the conceptualization of discourse as 'socially constitutive, as well as socially conditioned' (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258), is in line with my focus on the meaning-making processes in the peace process in understanding a move towards peace.

I applied descriptive coding to select relevant parts of the texts and to identify the topics of discourse, supported by the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA. After identifying the topics of discourse, I investigated the discursive strategies and linguistic means used to achieve a particular social, political, or psychological goal. In particular, I looked at discursive constructions and qualifications of social actors, and actions as well as the justification and questioning of arguments. After identifying the similarities and differences in the topics and the



discourse strategies, I decided to construct types of representations of the peace process to better understand and explain its complex social realities. Three different representations of the peace process were identified according to our analysis of the data. The types are named in terms of the thematic contents of the peace process because they provide self-explanatory summaries (see Table 3). The analysis was done in Turkish; I translated some quotes into English to illustrate the findings.

Table 3. 2. The three types of representations of the peace process

The peace process as...	A struggle for democratization (Evrensel and Özgür Gündem)	A way to develop Turkey (Sabah and Hürriyet)	A destructive and deceptive process (Sözcü)
Category constructions	Oppressed people/s (minorities, workers, women, etc.)	Nation, country, and the authority (the government)	Turkish nation and its enemies (terrorists, separatists)
Anchored to (Cultural resources)	Democratization problems, National goal of development, Values of humanity	National goal of development	The fear regarding the indivisible integrity of the state, Morality arguments about martyrs
Past-present-future link (Argumentation strategy)	Build a new future via the peace process by using the shared past	Build a new Turkey via the peace process to overcome the burden of the past	Prevent that terrorists' will being recognized in the future by resisting the peace process
Action orientation	Take part	Support	Deny, resist
Construction of the context	Open for everyone to discuss anything and create possibilities	The authority determines what can/can't be done and how	Constrained/ terrorists can't be interlocutors/ Identity can't be discussed
Treatment of others' representations	Asking for dialogue	Not recognizing	Treating as deception and denying

## ***Findings***

### *The Peace process as a political struggle for democratization*

The Evrensel and Özgür Gündem newspapers gave more voice to Kurdish politicians, leftist politicians, and unions. They present themselves as being supportive of the peace process by embracing Öcalan's letters. To start with, the Kurdish question is situated in the general history of the Middle East with references to imperialism, in which Kurds, Turks, and other peoples are

considered among the oppressed peoples suffering from imperialist practices. This construction aims to avoid category constructions of rivals, enemies, or us versus them and to build a common identity of the ‘oppressed’. Democratic resolution is constructed as a natural solution to the problem with reference to the progress of humanity and history by using terms like ‘zeitgeist’ and ‘rising values of humanity’, as the following extract from the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) illustrates.

The historical tragedy and resistance process that Kurdish people experienced ... now require a democratic resolution that is indispensable in this century. The zeitgeist, history, and rising values of humanity require it too. (Özgür Gündem, 23.03.2013, KCK)

The peace process is characterized as a political struggle for freedom and a more egalitarian and democratic system. To support this characterization as well as to include other cultural and ethnic minorities and address their problems, the peace process is anchored to the democratization problems of Turkey and is construed as offering solutions to these problems. The interpretation of the 10 articles of the Dolmabahçe Agreement in 2015 by the HDP representative, Baluken, suggests how all peoples of Turkey can benefit from the peace process with regard to rights and freedom, making the case for supporting the peace process.

The democratic status of identity is a resolution proposal developed against the efforts to singularize diversities in Turkey. (Evrensel, 01.03.2015, Baluken)

Moreover, the democratization discourse positions people as having agency and responsibility in the process. It is utilized to invite and encourage people to take part in the process and to build a new future, thereby construing people as agents. The fact that the peace process is about the future as much as it is about the past is highlighted to construe the context as open to change and consisting of possibilities and alternatives. The sentence in Öcalan’s Newroz letter “What our mutual past points out is our mutual need to form our future together” strikingly demonstrates

how the past is linked to the future. It illustrates Brescó's (2017) argument that different future imaginations shape how the past is reconstructed in order to interpret the challenges of the present and to mobilize the public towards certain political goals – in this case, to take part in the process and support it. This action orientation constructs the context as open to discussion and negotiation, open to all people.

Free and democratic societies are self-confident, productive, and creative societies that proceed to the future in confidence. ... It is not observed that identities that create their existence through denial, annihilation, exclusion, contempt, nothingness, oppression of others lived as a healthy society, nation, or individuals and created values. This call is a call to return to the humanistic values and truth of peaceful societies, to build a real, free democratic unity, peoples' democratic republic, by overcoming all fears, and it is an invitation to women and youth for responsibility and duty in building a new life. (Özgür Gündem, 23.03.2013, KCK)

The references to 'building a new future', 'creating values', and the emphasis on the role of 'societies' and 'peoples' in these processes provide a pragmatic force for mobilization, guiding and constraining present actions, as being cognitive alternatives and future imaginations (Brescó, 2018). For instance, in the extract above, the KCK constructs free, democratic, and peaceful societies' as 'creating values', 'self-confident', and 'living as a healthy society', and it is emphasized that denying, excluding, or oppressing others is not among these characteristics. It is implied that the future of the country regarding development and democratization is contingent on the democratic resolution of the Kurdish question. This can be considered a reference to the national goal of 'catching up' with the West and the development agenda that has always been central to political discourse in Turkey (Arsel, 2005).

Moreover, the mention of the necessity of 'overcoming all fears' in the extract above might be considered a vague reference to the fears related to the national identity and territorial integrity of the country that are reflected in the representation of the peace process as a deceptive and

destructive process (see below). It implies knowledge about others' representations that construe the peace process as something threatening or worrisome instead of a promising project. How to overcome the fears is not elaborated on. However, the constant invitation for discussion, dialogue, and negotiation might be considered a way to overcome fears and engage with others' representations. The KCK's explanation below about the necessity of a ceasefire signifies the importance of the construction of the context.

It is clear that an environment of ceasefire should be created primarily in order to provide an environment in which all parts of the society make a serious contribution to the resolution and participate easily; ideas can be expressed freely and discussed without suppression, efforts for resolution can proceed in a secure environment, dialogues can be developed and negotiated in a healthy manner. (Özgür Gündem, 23.03.2013, KCK)

The context is constructed as open for discussion and change and people are encouraged to participate; thereby the potential change that the peace process would bring is constructed as being shaped by all peoples in the country by discussing and participating in the peace process to build a new future.

#### *The peace process as a way to develop Turkey*

The Sabah and Hürriyet newspapers generally present themselves as being sympathetic to the peace process by focusing heavily on the eradication of terrorism through the peace process.

They give more voice to the members of the AKP government. To start with, the Kurdish question is represented as a burden for the country, with the consequences of violent conflict, the death of people, and material loss being mentioned frequently. Similarly, the metaphor of a bleeding wound is used to describe the problem. The peace process is constructed as a way to eradicate terrorism, to overcome the burden of terrorism, and to develop the country; this construction makes the case for supporting the process.

The association of the peace process with the development of the country is highlighted by the minister Yılmaz's explanation that the country should use its resources and energy to develop itself in the international arena instead of engaging in internal disputes. The national goal of development (Arsel, 2005) is used as a resource to represent the peace process and to construe the historical context.

We hope that politics will get rid of the shadows of guns in the shortest time, everyone can freely express their views and do politics. ... Turkey has suffered a lot from this problem, experienced many losses, now we should use our resources and energy, not for internal disputes but take Turkey to better places in the world. Within brotherhood law and in a democratic environment, we should develop our country together. (Hürriyet, 28.02.2015, Yılmaz)

The emphasis on the development of the country makes the categories of 'the nation and the country' salient and relevant for identity. Accordingly, the role of the government in the peace process, gaining legitimacy from its institutional role, is constructed as the authority that has complete control over what can be done, discussed, and negotiated in the process, thereby imposing their own representation of the peace process and restricting the context, as the extract below from a minister illustrates.

All other demands can be discussed once "one state, one nation, one flag, and one homeland" (the discourse) is acknowledged. Once this is established, I think we should protect and build upon it, and obtain the positive consequence in light of reason and our nation's wish. (Hürriyet, 28.02.2015, Zeybekçi)

The construction of authority consists of imposing action rules (Wagner, 2015) for other actors. It also indicates that the process has a top-down design that does not position people as having agency in the process, constraining their actions in the context, which is exemplified in the

explicit statements from the government not to criticize the peace process but to confirm the way it is operated by the government.

For God's sake, if someone is going to say something beneficial about the process, let them say it, otherwise they should be silent. If it is going to contribute to the process, sometimes our duty is to be silent.  
(Hürriyet, 23.03.2013, Eker)

However, it can be argued that agreeing not to criticize requires activity and agency, as giving unconditional support is not a passive process but an active one that may require defending the position against criticism or making only constructive comments.

A response to a criticism also demonstrates how others' representations are treated. For instance, the response of the prime minister of the day, Davutoğlu, to the concerns about the unity of the country raised by the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) reflects a language of domination that considers opponents as not understanding and not knowing. It is a clear example of denial of the perspective of others and creates a non-dialogical encounter (Jovchelovitch, 2007) in constructing the social context.

The MHP is immediately arguing that we are dividing the country? Who is dividing what? They have maintained this argument for years. Turkey is always uniting more. I read everyone's language regarding the subject of the national unity, e.g. central Anatolia. No one wants to see a martyr funeral anymore.  
(Sabah, 02.03.2015, Davutoğlu)

Once again, the peace process is construed as a part of the process to build a new future, a 'new Turkey'. The idea of a more developed and more secure new Turkey reconfigures the violent past as the burden to interpret the peace process and mobilize support for it. However, Bora (2016) argues that the 'new Turkey' discourse consists of claims about being confident and

strong, but doesn't articulate a clear content for these claims. Security, justice, and welfare are highlighted as the benefits of the process in the extract from Erdoğan's explanation below.

Today is the time to bury guns and end crying, let the process begin where people talk not use guns. I want the process to begin where people talk not fight. ... We experienced very painful times, we want to build a 'new Turkey' all together in which our children do not experience the same pain, live together in justice, welfare, in unity and fraternity. (Sabah, 22.03.2013, Erdoğan)

All in all, the peace process is constructed as a bridge from the past to the future by overcoming the burden of the past and moving towards a stronger and more developed Turkey. Although the emphasis on the country as a political institution more than the people creates an ambiguous perspective regarding the peace process, it can be argued that the ambiguous language is strategic as it provides a discursive flexibility to change the position easily if needed. This might be a caution regarding the hegemonic Turkish nationalism (Ozkirimli, 2014) or not being sincere about the peace process as argued by Toktamis (2015). Last but not least, although the language is ambiguous about the content, it is clear about the method, and the government's authority over the peace process, which restricts the discussion and negotiation of ideas, and thereby the social context.

#### *The peace process as a process of destruction and deception*

The Sözcü newspaper positions itself against the peace process and gives more voice to nationalist politicians. To start with, the violent conflict is referred to as separatist terrorism and its consequences are mentioned frequently in reporting on the peace process. There is not much mention of the aspect of identity politics and naming the problem the 'Kurdish question'. Based on the representation of the problem as separatist terrorism, the peace process is constructed as a process of destruction and deception that creates a threat to the unity of Turkey. The perception

of this threat is based on the tenacious fear regarding the indivisible integrity of the state with its territory and nation. This fear became reified by being incorporated in the laws (Castro, 2012) and it is powerfully communicated to the public through the prosecution of Kurdish politicians and parties since the 1990s.

The argument that the peace process is an act of treason is supported by drawing a historical parallel between the Independence War and the present. Those who were considered enemies in the Independence War, allies of the occupation, are considered the actors behind the process. This refers to the discourse of ‘foreign powers behind’ the Kurdish question who harm Turkey for their own benefits. In construing the historical context, the leader of the MHP, Bahçeli, not only delegitimizes the peace process but also encourages people to fight against it in the extract below.

Today, the conditions of the Independence War are emerging again. Those who supported the Treaty of Sèvres, the pawns of imperialism, the occupation residues, the toadies of captivity, have opened their eyes again. They are attacking with concepts like ‘opening, resolution, peace, and leaving guns’ to try their chance again. (Sözcü, 01.03.2015, Bahçeli)

The construction of the peace process as treason makes the categories of ‘Turkish nation’ and ‘its enemies/terrorists’ salient since the process is seen as detrimental to the Turkish nation and identity. The mention of reconceptualising citizenship, identity, and nation in the Dolmabahçe Agreement is construed as a threat to Turkish identity.

As if it is the opposite, the delusion of the legal and democratic assurance of free citizenship is a messenger of the division. The reference to a democratic understanding of the concepts of identity, definition, and conceptualization of identity is clearly a preparation to register an identity of ‘being from Turkey’ and a disgrace for eradicating the Turkish identity. (Sözcü, 01.03.2015, Bahçeli)



The phrase ‘as if it is the opposite’ in the extract above, meaning “as if there is no legal and democratic assurance of free citizenship”, demonstrates that Bahçeli does not step outside of his perspective (Jovchelovitch, 2007), that is, the privileges enjoyed by Turks. His rejection of the ‘as if’ phrase does not leave space to imagine and understand what other groups might be experiencing because of the non-recognition of their identities and the lack of legal protection, thereby restricting the existence of symbolic dialogical encounters in the social context.

Moreover, the categorizations of the Turkish nation and its enemies invoke a morality argument, as the interaction with the ‘enemy’ is construed as illegitimate and detrimental. Having Öcalan and the PKK as interlocutors in the process is considered the reason to delegitimize the process and to construe it as disrespect for the martyrs who died in the conflict. The violent past and the enemy image become obstacles to resolving the problem through negotiation. Thereby, this enemy construction constrains who can be an interlocutor in the context.

The government promises and makes the PKK a gift of everything that the PKK terror organization couldn’t accomplish with a gun, violence, and attacks. ... The most desperate thing is that the fate of Turkey and the Turkish nation is left to the initiative and fairness of a murderer who is sentenced to life in prison. (Sözcü, 21.03.2013, Bahçeli)

It is important to note that the AKP government is held responsible for the process and blamed for it. While the agency is attributed to the AKP government for the peace process, the distribution of agency to shape the future becomes the concern. The mention of “the fate of Turkey and the Turkish nation is left to Öcalan” implies a future imagination that should be prevented from happening, by stopping the peace process. It illustrates Brescó’s (2018) argument that the function of the future imaginations is to guide action and mobilize support (or here: resistance).

The argument that the peace process is an act of deception provides the ground to oppose it; as Galtung (1969, p. 167) argues, “it is hard to be all-out against peace” because of the common-sense desirability of peace. The deception argument is supported by various rhetorical tools in *Sözcü*, such as using a metaphor of theatre to represent the Newroz celebrations and claiming that the Turkish press had distorted Öcalan’s call in the celebration. Moreover, the sceptical approach of *Sözcü* concerning the sincerity and honesty of Kurdish politicians and the AKP government also underpins the deception argument. In the articles about the Dolmabahçe Agreement in 2015, the review of the peace process with a focus on the disadvantages experienced during the process as well as the presentation of the other events as the hidden agenda behind the peace process buttresses the deception claim. The extract below exemplifies this, when *Sözcü* analyses the Dolmabahçe Agreement by emphasizing that it took place just before the general election.

The government and the HDP called the PKK to ‘leave the guns’ just before the general election. ...

However, similar messages from Öcalan since the Newroz on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013 and statements that PKK would withdraw turned out to be hot air. The prime minister of the day, Erdoğan, explained that the PKK did not withdraw. (*Sözcü*, 28.02.2015)

In this case, *Sözcü* utilizes changing realities of the peace process to strengthen the claim that it is a deceptive process. The deception claim makes the case for opposing and denying the peace process; similarly, the destruction claim encourages people to resist and fight against the peace process. Together they position people as having agency and power to resist and stop the peace process.

In this representation, the other two representations are denied and resisted, and the social context is constrained by the claims about morality. It is plausible to argue that this

representation is a reflection of the Turkish State Discourse (Yegen, 1999) and how it deals with the peace process, as well as an illustration of how political and discursive efforts are required to maintain the status quo.

### ***Discussion***

Our findings suggest that there is no consensual representation of the peace process, but three different social representations as reflected in our sample of newspapers: the peace process as a political struggle for democratization is in line with the Kurdish movement's discourse; the peace process as a way to develop the country corresponds to the AKP government's discourse; and the peace process as a destructive and deceptive process is related to the nationalist discourse regarding the Kurdish question. This diversity of representations of the peace process shows the importance of contextual research that investigates constructions of the socio-political phenomenon rather than taken-for-granted definitions of it, for instance the importance of asking "What is the peace process?" before asking "Do you support the peace process or not?" in order to better understand what people think about the peace process. Moreover, the different social representations of the peace process and their interactions manifest how the peace process became 'a battle of ideas', wherein representations of others are challenged and resisted in symbolic knowledge encounters (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008; Howarth, 2006; Jovchelovitch, 2007; Moscovici & Marková, 2000).

Although the three different social representations of the peace process have different and even contradicting content and draw on diverse category constructions and cultural resources, there is one feature common to all: the consideration of the peace process as leverage to shape the future by reconfiguring the past. This finding supports previous work that has emphasized the impact of imaginations of the future on the reconstruction of the past to deal with the challenges of the

present and guide action (Brescó, 2017). This impact helps maintain temporal continuity between past, present, and future that is crucial to maintain the ontological security of identity and the system in the midst of change (Liu & Hilton, 2005; Liu & Sibley, 2009). The consideration of the peace process as leverage to shape the future by reconfiguring the past not only reveals the reconstruction of the historical context but also highlights the dynamic nature of the context, which is open for possibilities to impact the future.

The influence of the social, historical, and political structures on the understandings of the peace process became obvious with category constructions, cultural resources, and institutional power relations that constituted social representations. At the same time, social representations constitute the social and historical context in which the peace process is discussed, because they constrain or create opportunities about what can (can't) be discussed, and who can (can't) be an interlocutor in the peace process. This is achieved by setting action rules for one's own group and others (Wagner, 2015). These action rules create discursive possibilities about how to treat others' representations in knowledge encounters because they are constituted by the constructions of self and other, the distribution of agency and responsibility between self and other, and future imaginations about the relations between self and other. Different social representations of the peace process with their different constructions of the social context make the representation process not only a struggle for legitimacy but also a struggle for agency that is conceptualized as 'the power to shape mutual expectations within a collective' (Elcherath et al., 2011, p. 745).

I tried to illustrate meaning making processes in the peace process and how the diversity of meanings exist and are dealt with in acting upon a move towards peace.. This research only provides a configuration of social-psychological factors that are expressed by politicians and

newsmakers and are relevant in a case of a peace process. Among these, central ones are maintaining continuity between past, present, and future, the struggle for agency, and dealing with others' representations; their further relations and relevance for other members of a society as well as in other intergroup relations can be investigated in future studies.

It is important to address the poor condition of press freedom in Turkey that manifested itself in the data and the findings, that is, the data consist of politicians' quotations more than original views or interpretations. Copy-and-paste reporting is a major shortcoming of the digitization of the media in Turkey (Tunc & Gorgulu, 2012). It may be safer than developing an original view because of the restrictive legal framework and the partisanship of the media, especially on the subject of the Kurdish question that is considered a sensitive issue on which journalists are expected to follow the official ideology (Tunc & Gorgulu, 2012). However, I observed that the newspapers copy-and-paste the politicians who are in line with their world views more often than others, and this creates a meaningful difference between them and the different representations in our findings. Moreover, for our research purposes, direct quotations of politicians can be considered a contribution to the richness of the data since politicians are considered "entrepreneurs of identity" who position themselves as prototypical members of the group and speaking on behalf of the group while constructing identities to mobilize support for their political proposals (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). In this process they always orient to the public and take the public's expectations into consideration. The relational encounter between politicians and the public exists in their talks; while they propose new ideas and information they also refer to information consistent with existing beliefs, which creates opportunities for both stability and change at the same time.

What do these different representations of the peace process and their interaction mean for the peace process? It is clear that the Kurdish movement, the AKP government, and the nationalist politicians understood and expected different things from the peace process. Rumelili and Çelik (2017) argue that the construction of plural but mutually recognized and respectful narratives should be the aim in the peace process in order to avoid concerns over ontological insecurity in any group. They also argue that agonistic encounters would likely lead to mutually recognized narratives; our findings, the existence of different representations and their interactions in the form of a ‘battle of ideas’, might be considered a beginning of such an agonistic encounter. Here, it is also important to mention what happened after the peace process; the consideration of the institutional and symbolic power clarifies what remains as efforts and what becomes influential in shaping reality (Hewer, 2012), as became clear when the AKP government called off the peace process and started the military operations in August 2015. As the reality changed and violent conflict resumed, so did the representations of the peace process. For instance, President Erdoğan, also the leader of the AKP, said that “they (the Kurdish movement) treated the resolution process with treason” (Hürriyet, 2015), which shows that he has tried to re-represent the peace process and his re-representation seems akin to the representation of the peace process as a destructive and deceptive process. However, this does not mean that our findings are outdated, in fact they have become an important reference point in understanding how the peace process became part of the Kurdish question. The peace process might become part of the question in a different way in the future with changing representations of the peace process, perhaps including what went wrong to draw lessons for the next peace process. It is crucial to consider the Kurdish question as dynamic, which includes changing realities such as the peace process, curfews, and the operations that followed the peace process. Maybe even

Academics for Peace (see Butler & Ertür, 2017) who signed a peace petition to ask the AKP government to stop the conflict and resume negotiations, and then became a target of prosecutions, dismissals, and threats, became part of the Kurdish question. It can be argued that they would be involved in the next peace process in the future. As peace psychology adopts transforming conflict and promoting positive intergroup relations as its ultimate goals (Vollhardt & Bilali, 2008), our position consists in defending a peaceful resolution of this conflict and promoting social justice.

To conclude, all the above suggests taking into consideration the dynamic nature of social knowledge that presents possibilities for debate and dialogue, and thereby tries to shape the social context. In other words, an acknowledgment that social knowledge is dynamic and plural may set the ground for a social context that is truly open to discussion.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Understanding the peace process through online readers' comments**

New technologies of communication have transformed the traditional linear flow of content from producers to ordinary consumers. These new technologies supported by the Internet enable users to participate and interact in production processes. Users are able to engage in various communication practices such as reacting to a news article, engaging with an institution and peer-to-peer ordinary communicative engagement (Khosravinik & Unger, 2016). At the same time, the novel communication dynamics make difference and the unfamiliar more visible than ever (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez, 2015). Accordingly, how people deal with difference and unfamiliarity and how they treat others' views that are inconsistent with their own emerge as crucial questions that social psychology has recently become more interested in (Moscovici & Markova, 2000). This issue has been addressed intensively in social representation theory. Various scholars suggested ways of facilitating or preventing dialogical engagement with others' representations (e.g. Jovchelovitch, 2007; Gillespie, 2008; Sammut & Gaskell, 2010). In this



study, I aim to investigate encounters between different knowledge systems by analysing readers' comments to one particularly important article about the peace process (see the Method section for a brief outline of the article). By doing so, I aim to identify communication strategies that might help prevent or facilitate dialogical engagement with other representations.

### ***The new communicative dynamics and social representations***

The new technologies of communication have made plurality more visible and dealing with plurality a crucial task. For instance, online comments give us examples of what other people think, thereby they can inform and improve as well as alienate and manipulate (Reagle, 2015). Our views and identities become meaningful in relation to others, as any human mind is always oriented to other human minds (Markova, 2003). People try to conceive and communicate about social realities in terms of the other (Markova, 2003). At the same time, they incorporate knowledge about others into their knowledge systems in order to strengthen their knowledge against challenges (Gillespie, 2008; Elcheroth, Doise & Reicher, 2011).

The theory of social representations provides insights into how social representations themselves deal with plurality and how they enable individuals to negotiate the plurality of alternative (potentially competing) representations (Gillespie, 2008). According to the theory, the same group and the same individual can employ different ways of reasoning in the domains they approach with different perspectives and information (Moscovici, 1961/2008). This phenomenon, conceptualized as cognitive polyphasia, is informed by a view of internal flexibility of human cognition as people move constantly between identities and respond to the complexities of social life (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez, 2015). In addition to considering the existence of plural and even contradicting views as natural, it is acknowledged that different representations of the same object compete in their claims to reality (Howarth, 2006; Bauer &

Gaskell, 2008), like a ‘battle of ideas’ (Moscovici & Markova, 2000, p. 275). As the representations meet in symbolic or real knowledge encounters, they are contested and re-negotiated in potential dialogue, debate or conflicts (Jovchelovitch, 2007). In these encounters, representations of others can be silenced and resisted or defended and legitimized (Howarth, 2006; Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez, 2015); consequently, these encounters reproduce or transform the relationship with the other as well as the social systems (Wagner et al., 1999; Elchereth, Doise & Reicher, 2011).

Understanding how encounters between competing representations take place is essential to understand processes of thinking and communicating in relation to the other. Markova (2003) unfolds this question as “How the Ego and the other influence one another and negotiate their positions as co-agents of a joint action or as co-authors of a discourse” (p. 92). In an approach to understand communication with others, recognition or denial of the knowledge of the other is seen as the fundamental principle underpinning communication styles and cognitive outcomes of a knowledge encounter (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez, 2015). It can be argued that recognition or denial of the knowledge of the other is an essential factor in determining whether a perspective is open, bounded or closed (see Table 1). In an open perspective, recognition comes with being able to decentre from one’s own perspective and take others’ perspectives (Jovchelovitch, 2007). Moreover, Kislioglu (2017) emphasizes taking power asymmetry and unequal resources of groups into consideration while conceptualizing communication processes with the other. He explicates that decentring from one’s perspective requires resisting the taken-for-granted boundaries between groups and recognizing the other’s agency in constructing their representations. Similarly, Sammut and Gaskell (2010) state that understanding others’ point of view means understanding the underlying logic in its own frame of reference, which can be

realized by questioning the certainty of one's own point of view and reaching "an awareness that one's point of view is as fabricated as any other" (Sammur & Gaskell, 2010, p. 58). Hence, peaceful coexistence of different representations is possible with mutual recognition between self and other and perspective taking in engaging in a dialogue.

In addition to open perspectives that create peaceful coexistence, there are also bounded perspectives in which diversity is acknowledged but the logic of one's own perspective is held as immutable (Sammur & Gaskell, 2010). Even further, closed perspectives do not grant legitimacy to different perspectives and dismiss alternatives as wrong (Sammur & Gaskell, 2010). Similarly, Kislioglu (2017) identifies a communication process capable of *doing* and *transforming* the other by not respecting intergroup boundaries, invading and restricting the other's representations and eventually judging the out-group against the in-group's representations. This social psychological process of representing intergroup difference, defined as containment, "monopolises the intergroup comparison dimensions and judges others based on those dimensions" (Kislioglu, 2017, p. 126).

Moreover, Gillespie (2008) explicates meaning processes that can prevent dialogical engagement with alternative representations. In the context of plural and competing representations, semantic barriers help to dialogically resist alternative representations and protect the core representation from dialogical transformation (Gillespie, 2008). While conceptualizing the notion of semantic barriers, Gillespie (2008) brings together two semantic barriers that Moscovici (1961/2008) identified in his seminal study of psychoanalysis – rigid oppositions, transfer of meaning – with five other semantic barriers: prohibited thoughts; separation; stigma; undermining the motive; and bracketing. In addition, Sammur and Sartawi (2012) propose that attribution of ignorance serves as a semantic barrier by justifying lack of effort in understanding the other, whose

perspective is held as wrong and in need of correction. Gillespie (2008) emphasizes that there should be semantic promoters that facilitate engagement with others' representations and that the absence of semantic barriers can be a semantic promoter.

The plurality in public understanding and how it is treated in the social and political context and by society members is a fundamental factor that makes social change possible as systems change through the articulation of alternative representations by contesting and negotiating the dominant representations (Moscovici & Markova, 2000). In pluralistic conditions, by seeing viewpoints that are contrary to our own viewpoints we begin to see things differently and question our own views (Sammur & Gaskell, 2010). For instance, Sammur and Gaskell (2010) argue that determining superordinate goals to create positive intergroup relations can be done in critical spaces in which mutual and reciprocal agnosticism encourage the examination of divergent perspectives. Another example demonstrates how people dialogically incorporated their knowledge about others' knowledge to contest the policy sphere about new ecological laws successfully (Castro et al., 2017). In order to contest the new laws restricting recreational fishing, the locals of the Portuguese coast used their knowledge about potential accusations and tried to deflect them (to resist the laws' legitimacy). Then they made the laws partially illegitimate by arguing for a change that is in line with a shared value of both self and other.

In light of these theoretical considerations, it has become clear that how people deal with others' representations has a role in influencing social and political context by shaping an organization of coexistence of different representations and creating a possibility to change others' representations, and vice versa. I bring together various communication processes for dealing with others' representations in Table 1 and try to distinguish between communication processes and communication strategies in order to create conceptual coherence regarding the ways of

dealing with others' views. I argue that communication strategies can be considered as discursive strategies that comprise discursive constructions and characterizations used to perform various processes of treating others' representations as well as other social and political goals. They consist of people's representations of others' views (which may be contradictory to their own views or not) and of what significant others think about their own representations (called meta-representations) (Elcherath, Doise & Reicher, 2011). They can be used to make views more believable and more resilient against challenges in interactions.

Table 4. 1 Ways of dealing with others' representations

Perspectives	Processes of communication with the other	Communication strategies
Open	Decentre from own perspective (Jovchelovitch, 2007)	Semantic promoters (Gillespie, 2008)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resist taken for granted boundaries between groups (Kislioglu, 2017)</li> <li>Question certainty of one's own point of view (Sammut &amp; Gaskell, 2010)</li> </ul>	Discuss what concepts mean in theoretical and concrete terms
	<p>Able to take the perspective of the other (Jovchelovitch, 2007)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize agency of others in constructing their own representations in their own reasoning (Sammut &amp; Gaskell, 2010; Kislioglu, 2017)</li> </ul>	
Bounded	Acknowledge diversity (Sammut & Gaskell, 2010)	
	Hold one's own logic as immutable (Sammut & Gaskell, 2010)	
Closed	Deny legitimacy of others' knowledge (Jovchelovitch, 2007)	Dismiss alternative as wrong (Sammut & Gaskell, 2010)
	Construct/transform/restrict the other's representations (Kislioglu, 2017)	Semantic barriers (Gillespie, 2008)

In this study, I aim to identify communication strategies used in treating others' representations with an analysis of the readers' comments in the online comment section of a Turkish newspaper, since the online comments section is seen as a new public sphere in which readers engage in peer-to-peer ordinary communicative engagement as well as address the media and institutions of the social and political system (Hughey & Daniels, 2013; Khosravini & Unger, 2016). In order to understand the encounters between representational systems and the effects on dialogical engagement in the case of the peace process, I ask the following questions:

- How is the peace process made meaningful by the commenters of a news article about the peace process?
- What are the communicative strategies used to deal with others' knowledge?
- Do these communicative strategies help to facilitate or prevent dialogical engagement with others?

## ***Method***

### *Data*

The article and the comments chosen for analysis were published on the newspaper *Hürriyet*'s website. *Hürriyet* is among the most popular newspapers in Turkey (MedyaTava, 2016) and its website is among the most visited in the country according to SimilarWeb (2018). *Hürriyet* is also a newspaper that people with different political preferences read, according to the press party parallelism analysis by Çarkoglu and Yavuz (2010). I chose a news article about the Newroz celebration in Diyarbakır in 2013 and the comments the article generated. The Newroz

celebration in 2013 had critical importance for the peace process because it was publicly announced that the era of armed struggle was over. The article is a primary report of the event, a particularly central and encompassing article about the peace process, and its details and summary are presented in the following section. Considering that *Hürriyet* has a variety of readers with different political preferences, it is plausible to argue that this article is sufficient to elicit various ways of engagement. There were 140 comments, all of them written on the same day the article was published.

*Hürriyet* announced on its website that it does not allow the sharing of content that is illegal, threatening, insulting, humiliating, a violation of human rights, pornographic or that contradicts morality or commonly shared norms of the society. Furthermore, according to its comments policy *Hürriyet* has the right to delete or not to publish any content that they consider inappropriate without giving any reason; however, it is not possible to identify if any comment has been deleted. I extracted all the comments that were published under the news article. Two comments were left out: one because it was posted twice by the same commenter; the other was considered irrelevant because it consisted of statements about another commenter's personality rather than the peace process. The remaining 138 comments were considered appropriate for in-depth analysis.

Although some commenters posted more than one comment, a single comment is used as the unit of analysis, not the individual. The comments are not necessarily about the article but about the peace process in general. There are some comments about other comments, which helps to elucidate how people deal with others' perspectives. Although there are some short comments comprised of three to five words, most of the comments comprise two to four sentences.

### *Selected article*

The article chosen for analysis is entitled ‘Not the End, Rather the New Beginning’ (Son değil yeni başlangıç) and was written by Konuralp and Balıkçı (2013). It was published in the online version of *Hürriyet* on 22 March 2013 (see the link in the References). I will present a brief outline of the article and its topic in order to better understand the comments it generated.

The article summarizes the Newroz celebration in Diyarbakir and Öcalan’s letter in which he called on the PKK to withdraw from Turkey. The title and the lead are comprised of parts of his letter. The letter is given with obvious interpretations but without any expression of approval or objection, as the extract below exemplifies:

Öcalan devoted a special section to the Turkish public that he characterized as ‘Peoples of Turkey’, beginning with a salutation “Respectable Peoples of Turkey”. (Konuralp and Balıkçı, 2013)

The article is descriptive in the way that the event is described in detail, such as people’s dress, the number of security guards, the posters and the flags, the songs and the singers, the international guests. As for reactions to the event, only the reactions of Kurdish politicians who support the peace process and Öcalan’s letter are mentioned and quoted. The article also features a photograph of the crowd at the celebration, waving at posters of Öcalan. It can be argued that the article presents the peace process in a positive way but indirectly, by quoting Kurdish politicians and Öcalan’s letter without mentioning any criticism.

### *Data analysis*

A single comment is used as the unit of analysis, not the individual. In order to investigate how the peace process is made meaningful by the commenters of the news article, qualitative content analysis is conducted, i.e. the comments are assigned to the categories of a coding frame (Schreier, 2014). Two main categories were created, based on prior research about the peace



process explained in the second and third chapters: positions regarding the peace process and understandings of the peace process. Based on a close reading of the 138 comments, subcategories were created in a data-driven way, supported by using the MAXQDA program (VERBI Software, Berlin). Three subcategories were generated under the main category of positions: against the peace process; proponent of the peace process; unclear position. The main category of understandings has four subcategories: emphasis on actors; emphasis on procedure; detrimental for the country; beneficial for the country. These subcategories are further divided into sub-subcategories (see Table 4). After developing definitions, inclusion/exclusion criteria and typical examples, I conducted a trial coding twice within six weeks for 30% of the data. After revising the coding frame accordingly, I conducted the main coding. Relations between the understandings of the peace process and the positions were examined using visual tools of MAXQDA (see Table 4).

In a second step, communication strategies were investigated by asking how the commenters construct their own and others' knowledge and views, and how they use their representations of others' representations. The investigation of communication strategies was carried out through discourse analysis, particularly the techniques developed by Reisigl and Wodak (2015). I examined the discursive constructions and characterizations as well as the linguistic means used to achieve particular social and political goals.

## ***Findings***

### *Positions and understandings of the peace process*

The majority of comments (56.5%) express opposition to the peace process, with 33.3% categorized as unclear, that is, the position could not be identified as either pro or against the peace process (Table 2). Only 10.1% of comments express support for the peace process.

Considering that the news article presents the peace process in a positive way but indirectly, by quoting Kurdish politicians and Ocalan's letter, the majority of opposition to the peace process in the comments can be construed as a necessity for communication that is created by perceiving difference (Moscovici, 1994; Gillespie, 2008).

Table 4. 2 Positions regarding the peace process

<b>Positions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Against the peace process	78	56.52
Unclear position	46	33.33
For the peace process	14	10.14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Four subcategories are generated under the main category of understandings of the peace process (Table 3). The understandings are shaped by considerations about the influence of the peace process on the country, which is reflected in two of the subcategories: detrimental for the country and beneficial for the country. The other two subcategories deal with concerns about the procedure of the peace process and actor-based understandings of it.

Emphasis on actors is the most frequent subcategory. In this category, interpretations about characteristics and intentions of various actors such as politicians, Kurds, Turks, terrorists, and foreign powers are used to interpret the peace process (see Table 3). The martyrs are associated with the peace process by construing it as disrespectful for them and as causing emotional disturbance for their families. Similarly, in the representation of the peace process as destructive and deceptive in the third chapter, the peace process is construed as disrespectful for the martyrs. Emphasis on procedure, with 29% of comments, is the second most frequent understanding of the peace process. Its subcategories consist of: comparison to other contexts; questions about procedure and concessions; suggestions of additional or alternative solutions; definition of peace; future considerations (see examples in Table 3). Comparison to other contexts and suggestions of

alternative and additional solutions are made to justify or challenge the arguments about fairness.

Questions about procedure and concessions can be considered as scepticism about the peace process.

Table 4. 3 Examples of the subcategories of understandings of the peace process

Subcategories	Examples
<b>Emphasis on actors (51; 35.42%)</b>	
• Martyrs (4)	It (the peace process) is a betrayal against the homeland, the flag, the Ottomans, our martyrs, our history and our nation.
• Foreign powers (5)	The West is still using the divide-and-rule method. Don't follow the traitors. Let societies come together under the Turkish flag. This is how happiness and welfare take place.
• Turks (6)	There is no better punishment for this country and us, the Turkish people. We would even swallow and accept if Abdullah Öcalan becomes the prime minister of this country. The great Turk would die of grief if he had seen the country being ruled by these people.
• Politicians/parties (8)	We will witness in future whether the agreement for a common goal of two political parties, whose political ideals are very different from each other, will bring about peace or conflict to the country.
• Kurds (8)	Separation wouldn't work for you. It wouldn't work for the citizens with Kurdish origin who lives in the West region. They better surrender unconditionally (with their guns).
• Terrorists (20)	Those who think they have been struggling for their rights with gun until recently, how are they going to express their rights by using which knowledge or idea they have after today?
<b>Emphasis on procedure (42; 29.17%)</b>	
• Future considerations (10)	Öcalan is hoping for a great Kurdish state in Mesopotamia in the future. He can, but Turkish people will become the great leader of the region again just like they formed the Ottoman Empire.
• Alternative or additional resolution (9)	In the South-eastern Region, the taxes and the bills will be paid in time... Girls will be sent to school... Teachers will not be beaten or murdered... In schools, flag raising ceremonies will be done with enthusiasm...
• Defining peace (5)	I will call it peace when the money spent on guns will be spent on education, health, and culture; when obligatory service in Eastern region for civil servants is abolished; when the period of military service is shortened; when we don't hear the word 'martyr' in Turkey permanently.
• Comparing to other contexts (5)	Scotland is going for a referendum for independence. The English prime minister and the Scottish prime minister have signed a protocol. Is there bloodshed? ... We shall not talk about the level of democracy in England...
• Concessions (5)	The period of guns has ended... Well, which concessions are promised to be made?
• Questions about the procedure (8)	Terrorists with bloody hands will withdraw from the country under the state's watch. The relatives of martyrs will give their blessing to apo (Öcalan)... just to make peace, right? Then, either everyone will get a gun and fight for their rights or the justice will be implemented for terrorists too.
<b>Beneficial for the country (14; 9.72%)</b>	

• End of war (9)	It is not possible to please everyone in this situation. The children of the martyrs who died 30 years ago are becoming martyrs today. But this bloodshed should be stopped in some way? Where is it leading like this?
• Other benefits (5)	People should question the information given to them and analyse consequences of the ideas presented to them, and make decisions freely without being dependent on anyone. I think this process is a gain for this country, it makes people think and become more independent.
<b>Detrimental for the country (37; 25.69%)</b>	
• Win-lose framework (5)	Can anyone who looks at the picture above that has been taken in the Nevruz in Diyarbakir think that Turkish nation is winning?
• Threat perception (13)	You know what is funny? We can be imprisoned because of posting a statement that defends our own country.
• Deception (12)	They made a great show. Shame on them! They talk about peace, living together, no division of the country; but why don't they wave this country's flag, our glorious flag there? All is lie, all is empty.
• Fear of division (7)	Well, are we divided, so that guns are silent? I wonder if we are divided? I was ready to be a martyr instead of seeing this scene....

The subcategory 'detrimental for the country' consists of four sub-subcategories: deception; threat perception; win-lose framework; fear of division. Win-lose framework can be considered a cognitive framework that affects interpretation of actions and intentions of others and decreases the possibility of communication (Kempf, 2003). Perceived threat consists of examples of both realistic and symbolic threats that involve concerns about harm, loss of resources and values, honour and self-identity (Stephan, Ybarra & Morrison, 2009). While the fear of division has roots in the history of the country, which is incorporated in the laws, it is likely that the deception sub-subcategory is a result of not trusting the Kurdish side or the AKP government. It is plausible to argue that the subcategory 'detrimental for the country' reflects and reproduces the hegemonic Turkish nationalist discourse in making sense of the peace process, with the sub-subcategories very akin to the elaborations of the peace process as a deception and destruction process in the third chapter.

Beneficial for the country is the least frequent subcategory, with its argument based on two topics: end of war and benefits for the country. Peace, tranquility and living in fraternity are mentioned as benefits of the peace process that would make the country stronger and better.

The comments demonstrate that people make sense of the peace process by using their existing views and beliefs; consideration of the history and the public discourses about the issue emerge as being very crucial in understanding these meanings as well as the positions regarding the peace process. Table 4 shows the relations between the positions regarding the peace process and its subcategories. Support for the peace process is comprised of the benefits of the peace process for the country, the highlight being ‘ending the war’. The unclear and against positions cover the same content: emphasis on actors and on procedure. Where the against position emphasizes terrorists, martyrs and Turks more often, the unclear position emphasizes future considerations, concessions, questions about procedure and alternative solutions. The against position elaborates the ‘detrimental for the country’ discourse distinctly by emphasizing the deception argument, threat perception and fear of division. Defining peace is the only sub-subcategory of the understandings that co-occurs with all the subcategories of position.

Table 4. 4 Frequencies of co-occurrences between subcategories

Code system	For the peace process	Unclear position	Against the peace process	TOTAL
<b>Emphasis on actors</b>				
• Martyrs	0	0	4	4
• Foreign powers	0	4	1	5
• Turks	0	1	5	6
• Politicians/parties	0	2	6	8
• Kurds	0	5	3	8
• Terrorists	0	4	16	20
<b>Emphasis on procedure</b>				
• Future considerations	0	7	3	10
• Alternative or additional resolution	0	6	3	9
• Defining peace	1	1	3	5
• Comparing to other contexts	0	2	3	5
• Concessions	0	4	1	5
• Questions about the procedure	0	6	2	8
<b>Beneficial for the country</b>				
• End of war	9	0	0	9
• Other benefits	5	0	0	5
<b>Detrimental for the country</b>				
• Win-lose framework	0	0	5	5
• Threat perception	0	1	12	13
• Deception	0	3	9	12
• Fear of division	0	0	7	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>144</b>

### *Communication strategies*

In order to understand how the commenters approach others' views, it is useful to start with how they approach the media, in particular how they see the media coverage of the event. Although the news article represents the peace process in a positive way, in the comments section, half of the readers position themselves against the peace process. It can be argued that this difference supports the argument that the necessity of communication arises from perceiving difference (Moscovici, 1994; Gillespie, 2008). It is also reminiscent of the hostile media phenomenon, which is the tendency for people to "view media coverage of controversial events as unfairly biased and hostile to the position they advocate" (Vallone, Ross & Lepper, 1985, p. 584). Hence, it is plausible to argue that commenters who are against the peace process try to denounce the article. For instance, in the comment below, a commenter states that he is "going to save the link of the article" and he will "see in summer": he implies that the promises wouldn't be held. It is also an example of distribution of the communicative power as the reader participates in the production process by responding to the article and challenging it with his comment.

S... 22.03.2013 09:33:32

We will see in summer! I am going to save the link of this news article.

In approaching others, the commenters try to persuade other readers and commenters and at the same time they resist being persuaded by others, as the comment below illustrates.

O... 22.03.2013 14:07:41

I have seen that some friends said that they wish there had been peace, mothers hadn't cried, lives hadn't been lost (Let's give whatever they want. What's the matter). I GOT SAD!!! How can you say these things after the mothers sent their sons to the Dardanelles (the First World War) and cried afterwards??? Why are you coward only?

In the extract above, while re-representing the support discourse the commenter claims that it involves ‘giving whatever they want’ and not caring about it. In doing so, he not only treats the support discourse as if he knows all about it but also makes it unacceptable for himself to agree; by doing so he denies the peace process. He continues by reminding the readers of World War I and accuses others of being a coward in order to persuade them to his viewpoint.

Moreover, there are examples in which the commenters represent others’ knowledge as wrong and their own views as the truth in order to persuade others. For instance, the commenter below positions himself as knowledgeable by stating that he has watched the *Zeitgeist* documentary, and tells people to wake up and realize that the peace process exists because of economic issues. In this example others’ knowledge is discredited by claiming that it is not about Öcalan or the honour of the country and by the use of the phrase ‘wake up’. The strategy of dismissing others’ knowledge as wrong and offering one’s own as truth corresponds to the concept of ‘extension’ that Freire (1974/2005) explains as transmitting knowledge without reflexivity or considering the agency of new ‘knowers’.

O.... 22.03.2013 04:29:03

As a person who watched *Zeitgeist* (the documentary), I say Wake up peoples wake up, it is not about the baby murderer or the honor of the country. Everything is about money, the money that has been spent on the army because of the PKK. If the PKK stops, the money will not be spent and stay in the public treasury, will there be a reduction on taxes? No, where will the money go? Unknown...

Another communicative strategy used by some commenters is an expression of the assumption that other people share their view and feelings about the peace process and the celebration in Diyarbakir. For instance, the commenter below states that people have been shocked by the scenes from the celebration and the peace process “is going to separate Turks and Kurds from each other more” and “lead to more bloodsheds”. Based on these assumptions, the commenter

sets the case to resist the peace process. He reflects his own feelings to other people, which makes his position resilient to the challenge of seeing different views in the comments section.

C... 22.03.2013 09:54:14

This process is going to separate Turks and Kurds from each other more. Just the scenes from yesterday (the Newroz celebration in Diyarbakir) have shocked people. It would lead not to end of bloodshed but more bloodsheds in the long term!

He assumes this position to be a socially shared opinion, which implies that the case is clear and there is no need for further discussion. Hence it makes the position resilient to the challenges of others. In other examples of reflecting one's view and feelings to others, the commenter argues that the celebration made 76 million people (the population of Turkey in 2013) sad except for the supporters of terror. He construes that people who do not share his views are terror supporters, thereby discrediting others' positions.

I... 22.03.2013 07:45:42

Turkey can't be divided, that is for sure. But, except from partisans of the terror, the show yesterday (the Newroz celebration) made 76 million people deeply sad, ABSENCE OF THE TURKISH FLAG. The second; using people's common share, spring holiday, to show off strength of terror, they can make it in another date, 21<sup>st</sup> march's another name is not nevrüz terror holiday.

This egocentric perception is characterized as a 'false consensus effect', that is, people's tendency "to see their own behavioural choices and judgments as relatively common and appropriate to existing circumstances while viewing alternative responses as uncommon, deviant, or inappropriate" (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977, p. 280). Although it has been considered as bias in the literature, how it is used in communication to deal with others' knowledge is addressed here. It makes a certain representation as taken for granted and holds alternatives in question (Ross, Greene & House, 1977); in other words, it serves as a semantic barrier in these examples.



It can be argued that some of the commenters (explained above) use their own representations and others' representations to deny and resist the peace process. Denying and resisting the peace process are among the action orientations of the peace process: deception and destruction processes that are identified in the third chapter. This similarity can be understood by seeing both occurrences as reflections of the hegemonic Turkish nationalism and its efforts to restrict debate by constantly referring to the perceived threat to territorial integrity (Ozkirimli, 2014).

*Discussing definitions of concepts as a way to facilitate a dialogue*

In addition to the examples that others' representations are denied in the comments, there is an example of exchange between commenters that may create an opportunity for realizing the different underlying logic of different positions and questioning one's view, as Sammut and Gaskell (2010) suggested. In the example, the meaning of peace is discussed by commenters. When a commenter indicated that there is no loser in peace making, it evoked further comments; other commenters responded to him and argued that there is a winner and a loser in peace agreements. The discussion over the definition of peace continues in four comments that are quoted below.

S... 22.03.2013 12:20:36

Friends, let's stay calm; there is no loser in peace making. Let's not make internal conflicts our destiny.

Why don't we reach a level that Europe has reached at least? We can succeed it, if only we become a little tolerant.

M.... 22.03.2013 13:18:48

To S.... If there is no loser in peace making; why did we lose in the Sevres Treaty, have been invaded and divided? Peace agreements have a winner and a loser, you better look into history.

U.... 22.03.2013 13:20:49

The beginning of the end... According to the Geneva Conventions, war and peace agreements are made between two states. However, according to foreign powers, peace means the peace in Iraq, Libya, and Syria. I don't recommend anyone to get happy too early.

M.... 22.03.2013 14:02:40

To S... Peace agreements also have winner and loser. History is full of its examples. We are not against peace either, but we don't approve the way it proceeds and we don't trust the PKK.

As the commenters become aware of different opinions regarding the peace process, they suggest to each other to “look into history”, “stay calm” or “not to get happy too early”. A commenter states that they are not against peace but they do not approve of the method of the peace process. It can be argued that he imagines a symbolic ego–other relation exists between those who want peace and those who do not, and positions himself against such a claim. The discussion indicates that discussing what concepts mean and seeing their meanings differ might facilitate understanding that one's own view is constructed in the same way as others' views, as well as the underlying logic of others' representations. It can be argued that discussing definitions of concepts may have the potential to facilitate dialogue and recognize others' representations. The emphasis on meanings of concepts, peace in this case, reminds us of the propositions of Gavriely-Nuri (2010) and Gibson (2011), who argued for scrutinizing what concept means rather than treating them as transparent in order to understand particular social and political goals and actions in peace studies. I further argue that discussing what concepts mean may be a facilitator in negotiations both at the political and societal level, as well as at the interpersonal level. Lastly, even though it is very short, the discussion about the meaning of peace among the commenters can be interpreted by considering the various constructions of peace at the different phases on the peace process among different media groups (see Chapter 2). The questioning of whether what the peace process is about can be considered peace or not, and whether peace

agreements consist of losers and winners, or not, seems akin to the opposition discourse in the Turkish media in the second chapter, which argued that concepts like peace and democracy are used only to create a nice sounding atmosphere.

### ***Discussion***

The findings of this study demonstrate that the peace process is understood regarding its influence on the country (detrimental or beneficial) and the considerations about the procedure by the commenters of the news article in the *Hürriyet* newspaper. The commenters also incorporated their interpretations about the intentions and characteristics of various actors in their understandings of the peace process. These meanings indicate that the news article is interpreted in the lights of commenters' already existing beliefs and the public discourses about it. There were similarities between the understandings of the peace process and the communicative strategies used, and the constructions of peace and representations of the peace process that are explained in the second and third chapters. These similarities could be considered the result of referring to the same public discourses, especially hegemonic Turkish nationalism (Ozkirimli, 2014). Moreover, there are similarities and differences in the literature on the meaning-making process of a peace agreement. For instance, interpretations about the intention of the president are used to evaluate the peace efforts in the Philippines (Montiel & de Guzman, 2011). Although procedural concerns included the constitutionality of the peace agreement, participatory processes and public consultations in Montiel and de Guzman's (2011) study about the peace agreement, in the present dataset considerations about fairness in terms of concessions and justice emerged.

In half of the comments, readers expressed opposition to the peace process in a way that denounces the peace process and the news article. It can be considered an example of mutual

interaction between the media and its audience that is facilitated by the new technologies; this requires more attention in future studies. Various ways and influences of this interaction would enrich the new dynamics in media usage and effects.

Moreover, the readers in their comments use a variety of communicative strategies that help to persuade others and to resist being persuaded by them, such as knowledge extension and the false consensus effect. These strategies help to make one's position not only more agreeable but also more resilient against challenges. By using these strategies of knowledge extension and appeal to false consensus, the commenters take others' knowledge and thinking activity for granted; in turn, this may lead to not respecting others' agency. When this finding is interpreted, considering the understandings of the peace process constructed by the commenters, it may appear that others' agency in deciding what is beneficial or detrimental for the country is not recognized.

Last but not least, there were potential insights for promoting dialogue among the findings, that is, discussion about the definition of peace. Starting with discussing what the concept means for each one might be a facilitator for questioning one's views and then understanding others' perspectives with its underlying logic. Further research is necessary to observe its usefulness and effectiveness, but it would not be wrong to propose that it may become a semantic promoter, that is, a meaning process promoting dialogue with alternative representations (Gillespie, 2008).

Although the readers and their comments are not representative of the society, the meanings and meaning-making processes can be inferred to be representative of the nationalist discourse in general, as the similarities with the findings of the second and third chapters also indicate. It is also important to acknowledge that the characteristics and experiences of commenters may affect

their comments but the data analysed in this study do not provide much information about them.

This study demonstrates that online readers' comments can be used to investigate how people deal with a plurality of views. It is important to address online influences of the ways of treating others' views. The anonymous and computer-mediated platform of readers' comments may facilitate denouncing or discrediting others' views, but it may also facilitate articulating ideas that may seem highly controversial. Further research is necessary to investigate influences of physical and social conditions on ways of dealing with difference at the interpersonal level.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

This final chapter consists of the summary of the empirical studies presented in the previous chapters, discussion of contributions and limitations of this research project, personal reflection as well as suggestions for future research.

#### ***Summary of the Key Findings***

In this thesis, I investigated various understandings of the concept of peace and the peace/resolution process regarding the Kurdish Question in Turkey in order to contribute to our understanding of plurality and the dynamics of social knowledge. In particular, I examined how different understandings of the concept of peace and the peace process are based on various cultural and social resources, how these different understandings exist together – deal with each other – and in turn function to support or oppose the peace/resolution process in a way that promotes or inhibits social change towards peace.

In the first empirical study of this thesis, I draw upon Gavriely-Nuri (2010) and Gibson's (2011) suggestion to investigate social and political constructions of peace in order to comprehend

particular goals the constructions are aimed at, instead of treating the concept of peace as transparent. I investigated how constructions of peace change as they encounter a variety of constructions as well as adapt to changes in physical realities, such as a crisis in the peace process. I examined 610 news articles from different phases of the peace/resolution process and two groups of the newspapers by using corpus linguistics techniques. In the pro-Kurdish movement media, peace is associated with democracy for both the process of peace-making and the state of peace in the beginning phase of the peace process, and this association is highlighted as a necessity in the development phase. In the Turkish media, peace construction consists of various and sometimes contradicting views in the beginning phase and during the crisis; however, it is clarified with the emphasis on disarmament in the development phase. The emergence of the crisis in the peace process and awareness of discrepancies with other constructions created a symbolic encounter in which constructions are contested and adapted to make sense of changing physical realities by emphasizing the *sine qua non* of peace. The peace constructions also aim to mobilize public reaction, however they are adapted according to the changing physical realities and other constructions as well. That is, projecting the desire for peace onto the people has changed to evoking apprehension regarding the future of the peace process and insistence on the expression of support. The efforts for mobilizing support for the peace process indicate that a common-sense wish for peace does not necessarily turn into support for the peace process.

In the second study of this thesis, explained in the third chapter, I investigated how the peace process is made meaningful and how diversity of social representations of the peace process are dealt with. I examined 34 news articles from five different newspapers by using critical discourse analysis. The influence of the social and political structures and representations of history on the

representations became clear with various category constructions, cultural resources and institutional power relations that constituted social representations. At the same time, social representations construct the social context in which the peace process is discussed, because they constrain or create opportunities about what can (can't) be discussed, and who can (can't) be interlocutor in the peace process. Moreover, the action orientations of the social representations created discursive possibilities about how to treat others' representations in encounters, since social representations are constituted by the constructions of self and other, the distribution of agency and responsibility between self and other, and the future imaginations about the relations between self and other.

The theoretical considerations of social representations theory explicate that how people deal with others' representations has a role in shaping social relations by an organization of coexistence of different representations and creating a possibility to change others' representations. In the third empirical study of this thesis, explained in the fourth chapter, I investigated the communicative strategies used to deal with others' knowledge in making sense of the peace/resolution process in online readers' comments. The commenters use a variety of communicative strategies that help to persuade others and to resist being persuaded by them. These strategies include dismissing others' knowledge as wrong, inappropriate and uncommon and offering one's own knowledge as truth and transmitting it without reflexivity, or seeing one's own judgments as common and appropriate to existing circumstances without considering the agency of other knowers. Moreover, I identify a strategy of defining concepts as a way to facilitate dialogical engagements with others. I argue that revealing that concepts are constructed differently may facilitate questioning one's own views and recognizing the different underlying reasoning that others use.



From the first empirical study to the last one, I investigate the diversity of social knowledge and the historical, cultural and political factors that influence their construction. I look at how these various subjective understandings exist together, how they deal with each other and how they orient people to treat others' understandings. I also identify how the various understandings change as a result of interactions with each other and adapt to changing physical realities. Lastly, I interpret how these various understandings constitute social context that promote or impede social change towards peace. By doing so, I tackle the role of the plurality and dynamics of social knowledge on social change towards peace. I argue that focus on these relations provides a conceptual framework to address the social psychological aspects of the complexity of the move towards peace.

### ***Contributions***

The complexity of the move towards peace is clearly acknowledged in the literature since it requires fundamental transformations from the culture of war to the culture of peace. Although what needs to be changed at structural level and in terms of societal beliefs has been elaborated (Bar-Tal, 2009; Lederach, 2003), how these changes come about remained rather vague. I incorporated social representations theory's elaborations about social change into the understanding of the move towards peace. While historical, cultural and political resources and power relations influence constructions of representations, representations constitute power in determining social practices and, in turn, social and political context. How people deal with others' representations – how they challenge, resist or accept the way their own representations are treated – has a crucial role in shaping (challenging or reproducing) social contexts. Thus, this research project illustrates a social representations approach to the peace process that addresses the diversity and dynamics of social knowledge and its role on social change towards peace. In

other words, changing realities and knowledge about discrepancies in other representations created a symbolic encounter in which representations are contested and adapted to make sense of changing realities, and most importantly representations are used to make the peace process fit the expectations of particular groups by shaping mutual expectations within the society.

Moreover, I elaborated how social representations shape the social context of knowledge encounters by constraining or creating opportunities about what can (can't) be discussed, and who can (can't) be an interlocutor in shaping the future. I also demonstrated that a well-known concept of social psychology – the false consensus effect – and a concept of education studies i.e. knowledge extension, act as semantic barriers in communication with others whose views are contrary. These concepts about how others' knowledge is taken for granted are used as communication strategies to make one's views more agreeable and resilient against challenges. I identified a communication strategy that may facilitate dialogical engagement with others: that is, discussing definitions of concepts first, since this might help in producing the realization that others have different reasoning and ours is just one of many.

Although I investigated constructions of peace and the peace/resolution process at various levels in the empirical studies of this thesis, it is plausible to argue that these studies act as a form of triangulation. By demonstrating the constructions and the ways of dealing with diversity at various levels, the empirical studies come together to provide a better understanding of the complexity of the peace process and the interplay of the societal and interpersonal levels. While various understandings of peace and the peace/resolution process emerged in the empirical studies, some of these various understandings have reflected the same existing discourse. For instance, the representation of the peace process as a destructive and deceptive process in the third chapter and detrimental for the country subcategory of the understanding of the peace

process in the fourth chapter, reflects the hegemonic Turkish nationalism discourse (Yegen, 1999).

Although using longitudinal data to be able to observe representations in the making is already encouraged in the social representations approach (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008; Moscovici & Markova, 2000), this research project has demonstrated the importance of using longitudinal data in investigating the move towards peace. To be able to investigate the move towards peace, which usually take place as slow changes in groups' natural and social environments, it is crucial to take into account any process that may propel or impede this move, such as time and changing physical realities. Thus, in addition to explaining change, explaining why change does not come about can also be considered as a contribution to our understanding of the move towards peace. It is crucial to reveal the barriers to the move towards peace because the means to overcome them can be identified. For instance, in this project, the interactions between social representations and their action orientations, the cultural and political resources they are based on as well as the way they shaped the social context reveal why change towards a culture of peace did not become stronger. However, it is necessary to concede that the breakdown of the peace/resolution process can/should be seen as the main reason why positive change towards peace did not occur.

Lastly, I analysed news articles from online versions of the newspapers along with the online readers' comments, because I aimed to take into account media organization and reception changes due to technological progress. For instance, the analysis of the online readers' comments provides an example of how people engage with news articles and how they try to influence the way others' receive news articles. Himmelweit (1990) argues that not taking into account how media organization changes due to technological progress and political pressure will mean we

will always be studying yesterday, a time of limited significance. Therefore, I address the poor condition of media independence in Turkey in the previous chapters and its manifestations in the data. I have argued that the worrisome picture of press freedom is not a reason to refrain from examining the media, but rather the reason to scrutinize it in order to investigate whether the newspapers develop their own views of the political phenomenon or only disseminate the views of the power holders. For instance, the news articles used in this research project consist of politicians' quotations more than original views or interpretations, as Tunc and Gorgulu (2012) argue that copy-and-paste reporting is a major shortcoming of the digitization of the media in Turkey. Moreover, it may be related to the subject of the Kurdish question, which is considered a sensitive issue on which journalists are expected to follow the official ideology (Tunc & Gorgulu, 2012). However, I observed that the newspapers copy-and-paste the politicians who are in line with their world views more often than others, and this creates a meaningful difference between them and the different representations in our findings. Furthermore, for our research purposes, direct quotations of politicians can be considered a contribution to the richness of the data since politicians are considered "entrepreneurs of identity" who position themselves as prototypical members of the group and speak on behalf of the group while constructing identities to mobilize support for their political proposals (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

### ***Limitations***

Although this research project contributes to the understanding of the complexity of the move towards peace and the role of plurality and dynamicity of social knowledge, it is not free from various methodological and conceptual shortcomings.

One general limitation is regarding the data used in this research project. Although I focus on the period of the peace/resolution process considering the Kurdish question in Turkey, data on other

stages of the Kurdish question would have enriched the understanding of the peace/resolution process. Data from other channels of communication in society in addition to the media might have contributed by revealing other social representations, their underlying basis, and their functions as well as other forms of treating others' representations.

Moreover, it should be kept in mind that this study and its findings are based on one specific case, the peace/resolution process regarding the Kurdish question in Turkey, even though this research project has been able to make contributions beyond that immediate context by illustrating the social representations approach to the move towards peace. It would be extremely interesting to observe how the move towards peace takes place in other settings, and to explore what other cultural and contextual factors influence the interplay between social systems and society members.

### ***Reflexivity***

In this part, I reflect upon my experience in conducting this research project. Reflexivity, which can be described as the critical review of one's premises and interpretations, is a crucial part of doing discourse analysis (Wodak, 2001). Since the role and involvement of the researchers in what they produce as knowledge needs to be addressed, it can be argued that reflexivity is an integral part of any research of social phenomena.

First of all, I think it is important to acknowledge my own personal non-experience of the conflict or its consequences, apart from living in the society in which the conflict has played a role in the restricted democratic debate (Ozkirimli, 2014) and an intolerant atmosphere (Keyman, 2012). To illustrate the importance of personal (non)-experience, I can refer to the questions about my motivations for studying the Kurdish question that have been asked by various colleagues and audiences of my presentations. I think these questions were about my

interpretations and potential emotional reasons behind them. Sometimes they were about whether I am capable of comprehending the conflict situation. I have questioned myself in this regard as well, which required many hours of self-reflection and reconstruction of childhood memories, and I believe I have rediscovered the reason through the journey of this thesis.

I grew up with parents who are different in terms of social and political views compared to the relatives and a small circle of relationships I have been part of as a child. I grew up to realize that what I thought to be normal and accepted in terms of politics was not socially shared in our small town. I came to realize some views were better not spoken aloud outside of the home. As I questioned this difference, the reasons for it, and mostly why some things can't be discussed, I thought I should do something to understand it. Thinking retrospectively, I believe these questions were the reason I chose social psychology to study and as the subject of my PhD. Now I realize that, in this thesis, I have found a larger example of what I witnessed as a child; that is the plurality of social knowledge and various ways of dealing with it. Luckily, I learnt that they are based on historical, cultural and political conditions and power relations and there are both peaceful and not-so-peaceful ways of dealing with difference. I also discovered that these ways are open to change, not fixed.

Moreover, throughout the period of my PhD, I have witnessed the phenomenon I was investigating, the relations between politics and society members and their social representations. To be more clear, in 2014 when I started this research project, the peace/resolution process was in operation. However, after it broke down in 2015, the socio-political conditions have changed drastically. In the period of the military operations after 2015, not only were the discussions about the peace process not welcomed but nor was talking about peace in general. Hence, working on something that was not wanted to be talked about has required a constant emotional

labour for me. Here, it becomes related to studying conflict, which is an extremely delicate endeavour. In my opinion, studying conflict requires engaging in activism and advocacy as well. Otherwise it feels like making others' pain a source of profit. As peace psychology is inherently normative and aims to transform violent conflict and promote cooperative intergroup relations (Vollhardt & Bilali, 2008), my position consists of defending a peaceful resolution of this conflict and promoting social justice.

As I recognize the importance of plurality and how it is treated as a source of social change, and that understanding others is possible through recognizing others' agency in constructing their own views in their own reasoning, I become more and more meticulous in understanding and explaining various representations. I convey their claims to reality with a consideration of institutional power and historical symbolic power relations. This consideration shaped understandings of which representations are dominant and which are alternative. Moreover, after emphasizing the importance of plurality, it would not be fair to claim that the social representations of the peace/resolution process explained in this thesis are exhaustive. It is always possible that others will develop some other representations or create alternative interpretations. I think a variety of interpretations may enrich our understanding of the dynamics of the peace/resolution process.

Lastly, I would like to follow the suggestion of Mountz and her colleagues (2015) to talk about how intertwined life and work are in academia as one of the ways to create a more cooperative and caring university and academic culture. Since starting this PhD, I have coped with two international and two national movements, the organization of weddings, depression, therapy, and other life-changing experiences. These experiences have made me realize the importance of caring, and the importance of communication and interaction in caring and in any social practice.

Here I owe thanks to the theoretical perspectives I used in this project for making me rediscover the role of language and welcome plurality, complexity and change as natural processes.

### ***Future research***

The suggestions for future research can be organized in two ways: the first one is regarding the case of the study and the second one is regarding the theoretical elaborations. Firstly, since the conflict resumed after the breakdown of the peace/resolution process, the representations of the peace process after it ended need to be investigated. For instance, President Erdoğan, also the leader of the AKP, said that “they (the Kurdish movement) turned the resolution process into treason” (*Hürriyet*, 2015), which shows that he has tried to re-represent the peace process and his re-representation seems akin to the representation of the peace process as a destructive and deceptive process. However, this does not mean that our findings are outdated, in fact they have become an important reference point in understanding how the peace process became part of the Kurdish question. Gergen (1973) argues that social psychology should be studied as history, since social interaction is not insulated from cultural and historical change, thereby social psychology functions as a sensitizing device that can enlighten the variety of factors potentially influencing social practice in various situations. Accordingly, I argue that the peace process might become part of the Kurdish question in a different way in the future, with changing representations of the peace process, perhaps including what went wrong to draw lessons for the next peace process. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the Kurdish question as dynamic, which includes changing realities such as the peace process, the curfews and the operations that followed the peace process.

Regarding the suggestions for the theory of social knowledge and the move towards peace, the elaborations about the role of plurality and dynamicity of social knowledge, how diversity is



treated in the social and political context, for social change towards peace explained in this research project are not exhaustive but just one form of how social change towards peace might come about. Therefore, questions about how social change towards peace might come about and other factors that affect this process need to be asked constantly to be able to better understand ever-changing complexity of conflict and move towards peace.

Similarly, the investigation of ways of dealing with difference and competing representations in different contexts by using various research methods may reveal various ways of dealing with difference as well as the factors that influence these ways. It is plausible to expect differences in the ways people deal with others' representations in various forms of relationships between self and other. For instance, any potential role of emotions in these processes would be intriguing. Moreover, these various ways of dealing with others' representations, and especially the ones that bring in peaceful coexistence, need to be disseminated to the public because this knowledge would be helpful in communicating problems and transforming conflict at both interpersonal and intergroup levels.

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## Appendix

### The Texts

1. Eş Başkanlar: Barış iradesinin arkasındayız 21 Mar 2013  
<http://www.evrensel.net/haber/52162/es-baskanlar-baris-iradesinin-arkasindayiz>
2. 2 milyona yakın kişi Newroz alanında! 21 Mar 2013  
<http://www.evrensel.net/haber/52141/2-milyona-yakin-kisi-newroz-alaninda>
3. Selahattin Demirtaş: Kobanê evimizin içidir 09 Oct 2014  
<http://www.evrensel.net/haber/93564/selahattin-demirtas-koban-evimizin-icidir>
4. ‘Silah bırakın’ demedi, 21 Mar 2013. <http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2013/gundem/iste-aponun-mektubu-252658/>
5. PKK şov Diyarbakır’da! 21 Mar 2013. <http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2013/gundem/apo-lider-gibi-252388/>
6. Bahçeli’den sert açıklama 21.03.2013  
<http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2013/gundem/bahceliden-sert-aciklama-4-253062>
7. Başbakan'dan kritik açıklama 22.3.2013  
<http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2013/03/22/basbakandan-kritik-aciklama>
8. 'Silah değil siyaset zamanı' 22.3.2013  
<http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2013/03/22/silah-degil-siyaset-zamani>
9. Tarihi Nevruz, 21 mar 2013 <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2013/03/21/tarihi-nevruz>
10. Öcalan'ın mesajının şifreleri, 21 mar 2013 <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ocalanin-mesajinin-sifreleri-22868814>
11. Son değil yeni başlangıç, 22 mar 2013 <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/son-degil-yeni-baslangic-22871254>
12. Başbakan’a ‘Serok Vezir’ diyorlar, 22 mar 2013, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/basbakan-a-serok-vezir-diyorlar-22878908>
13. Öcalan: Milyonların şahitliğinde yeni bir dönem başladı 23 Mart 2013 <http://www.ozgur-gundem.com/haber/68173/ocalan-milyonlarin-sahitliginde-yeni-bir-donem-basladi>
14. KCK: Geri çekilme için alt yapı oluşturulmalı, 23 Mart 2013 <http://www.ozgur-gundem.com/haber/68362/kck-geri-cekilme-icin-alt-yapi-olusturulmalı>
15. İşte meydan, işte önderi, işte milyonlar, 22 Mart 2013 <http://ozgur->

- gundem.com/haber/68218/iste-meydan-iste-onderi-iste-milyonlar
16. Hükümet acil toplanıyor Ekim 7, 2014 <http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2014/gundem/hukumet-acil-toplaniyor-616940/>
  17. Hükümetten yeni açıklama 8.10.2014  
<http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2014/10/08/hukumetten-yeni-aciklama>
  18. Oyuna gelme gizli eller devrede 9.10.2014  
<http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2014/10/09/oyuna-gelme-gizli-eller-devrede>
  19. Dicle: Bu patlama doğru anlaşılmalı 08 Ekim 2014 <http://www.ozgur-gundem.com/haber/120090/dicle-bu-patlama-dogru-anlasilmali>
  20. Mehdi Eker'den Diyarbakır'da açıklama 08 Ekim 2014  
<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/mehdi-ekerden-diyarbakirda-aciklama-27348712>
  21. 'Halkların kardeşliği'ndeki 'halk' ayrımı!, 8 october 2014  
<http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2014/gundem/halklarin-kardesligindeki-halk-ayrimi-617354/>
  22. Bu kaçınıcı silah bırakma!, 28 feb 2015, <http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2015/gundem/bu-kacinci-silah-birakma-757612/>
  23. Oslo'da varılan mutabakat Dolmabahçe'de açıklandı! 3 mar 2015  
<http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2015/gundem/osloda-varilan-mutabakat-dolmabahcede-aciklandi-759861/>
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[www.sozcu.com.tr/2015/gundem/devlet-bahceliden-mektup-degerlendirmesi-758261/](http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2015/gundem/devlet-bahceliden-mektup-degerlendirmesi-758261/)
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## **Statutory Declaration**

(on Authorship of a Dissertation)

I, Nazan Avci, hereby declare that I have written this PhD thesis independently, without any unauthorized aid. I have used only the sources, data, and support clearly mentioned and described in the text. The intellectual property of other authors used in the dissertation text is credited to them and properly referenced. This PhD thesis has not been submitted for conferral of degree elsewhere.

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Bremen, September 05<sup>th</sup>, 2019

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Nazan Avci