

# Youth Unrest, Intergenerational Solidarity and Feminist Impetus in Social Movements: The Case in Istanbul

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"To paraphrase a famous scholar: activists make history, but they do not make it just as they please. In fighting one political battle, they shape the conditions of the next one" (Meyer 2015: 390).

## Introduction

This study aims to discuss the direct and indirect role of feminist struggles for equal citizenship, social, economic and political participation and representation on women's agency in current social movements that started in Istanbul in May 2013 and mostly named as Gezi Park resistance, Taksim revolt or rather June upheavals, as it resulted in a nationwide protest and ignited demonstrations in 79 cities except Bingöl and Bayburt (Ayata *et al.* 2013: xv). The study is based on participant observation and semi-structured interviews with eight women, all of whom named themselves as feminists, engaged in feminist politics and reported to have taken part in 2013 June upheavals. Except one who was politically active in a mixed group leftist organization (Halkevi), the rest reported to have been active in different feminist organizations such as Mor Çatı ('Purple Roof'), Socialist Feminist Collective, Istanbul Feminist Collective, Equality Watch Women's Group (ESITIZ), Women for Women's Human Rights, Van Women's Association (VAKAD), Women's Media Watch Group (MEDIZ), Amargi ('Liberty' in Sumerian), Kader and so on. Some of these women have also had other political

engagements in Human Rights Association, Women for Peace Initiative and several non-governmental organizations as well. The one who did not have any affiliation with a feminist organization also mentioned that she was thinking about getting engaged with a feminist structure since she saw feminist struggle as one of the most legitimate and indispensable lines of political struggle in current Turkey. Half of those women I interviewed were in their mid 50s and active in feminist struggle since the mid 1980s, and they all had left wing political affiliations beforehand. The other half was between the ages of 27 and 35, and reported to have had a feminist consciousness and associated political engagement at least for ten years. Though two generations appear in that picture, I could not remark a notable generational difference in their interpretation and argumentation of the issues concerning feminist movement, women's agenda and the June upheavals. That might be partly because the issues feminists dealt with has not changed much, and partly because feminist activists managed, to a greater extent, to form horizontal organizations with equal representation, which made intergenerational exchange and solidarity possible among women from different backgrounds. Some slight differences could be ascribed to their organizational affiliations.

The June upheavals that started in May 2013 as a reaction to police attacks on people who tried to prevent the destruction of Gezi Park in Taksim are widely interpreted as a nationwide outcry against the diffusion of market norms in all aspects of life and accompanying ecological damage, environmental destruction of community spaces by top down planning of urban land as well as increasing state authoritarianism, shrinking space for voicing opposition, growing uncertainty, clientelism and precarity in labour market (see Atılğan 2013: 55; Kuymulu 2014a; Türkmen 2014: 220-223; Taşkale 2014: 229, 237; Gül 2014: 325).<sup>1</sup> It can also be interpreted as a reaction to the ways to implement urban transformations, legal changes, educational and health reforms, all of which are conducted rather anti-democratically, ignoring experts' views, professional's warnings and public discontent. Eventually, because they resulted in dramatic consequences in social, political, legal and economic life, an immense amount of people from a rather wide spectrum reflected their discontent and opposition to those so-called reforms or transformations that are speeded up and implemented even before the legal permissions are provided.<sup>2</sup>

The beginning of the June upheaval resembles a lot to the uprisings in other regions of the Middle East (see Goldstone 2015). Although it develops as a reaction to a long-lasting neoliberal programme implemented together with an Islamic conservative policy of a ruling government and its leader, the events started when the police attacked a relatively small number of environmentalists camping in the park and watching out against the cutting of trees. This resistance to the cutting of trees surprisingly turned out to be the reflection of a nationwide public anger to "new Turkey" project of the government, which is realised step by step through several political, economic and cultural interventions, both in urban and rural Turkey. Top down plan to reconstruct

Taksim Gezi Park with military Ottoman barracks, a shopping mall and a mosque is widely interpreted as another symbolic and ideological fight of Islamist conservative Justice and Development Party (JDP) against secular republican history of Turkey.<sup>3</sup> Together with neoliberal political economic implementations, a rather authoritarian social and political engineering, interference with non-Islamic, non-conservative, relatively secular life styles, expanding state control in all aspects of life made Islamist conservative JDP government and its sovereign leader – who expressed their intention to rule first at least until 2023 and later till 2071 – the central target of the protests. According to a survey conducted by a research company, two major motivations behind participation to the June upheavals were listed as limitations on liberties and discontent with state politics, including police violence and Prime Minister Erdoğan's<sup>4</sup> attitude and explanations (Konda 2014: 18-19). People from quite distinct segments with different political leanings took part in the movement and that allowed unanticipated dialogues and comradeships even between antagonistic poles. As all my informants stated, in Taksim there was a totally heterogeneous mass, even embracing the ones who voted for JDP beforehand: there was everyone e.g. from extreme nationalists to LGBTI groups, from housewives to students, homeless to bosses, or blue collar workers to well educated unemployed professionals who were plaza workers formerly. Such a widespread upheaval reflected a crisis in Turkish 'representative democracy', which is always legitimized highlighting the governing party's and its leader's ballot box success but ignoring the fairness of the game in Turkey's election system that invalidates significant amount of votes with its extraordinarily high 10% threshold.

Just like earlier governments, JDP also based its legitimacy on ballot success, and worked for Islamist conservative reorganization of institutions and social life, as well as for rearrangement of the market according to a neo-liberal program, which was initiated much before, in the 1980s. With a great media power in hand, the neo-liberal program is introduced most of the time directly by the state actors to wide sections of the society sometimes with falsified, deceitful or dumbfounding information (see Vassaf 2015: 273).<sup>5</sup> Losing their hope in political parties and the election system, especially from the young generations many people tended not to bother voting. However, this did not mean that they were apolitical, as claimed during the events on several TV channels by so many social scientists (Kurtuluş 2014: 271-273), but rather it meant that they rejected the conventional ways politics is made.<sup>6</sup> As Della Porta pointed out, decline in voting percentages did not mean decrease in interest in politics; rather it reflected the inclination to unconventional political participations in the form of social movements to voice demands for justice, liberty and more participatory conceptions of democracy in general (Della Porta 2013: 34, 36, 52): "While some more conventional forms of participation (such as voting or party-linked activities) are declining, protest forms are instead increasingly used [...]. Citizens vote less, but are no less interested or knowledgeable about politics. And if some traditional types of associations are less and

less popular, others (social movement organizations and/or civil society organizations) are instead growing in resources, legitimacy and members" (Della Porta 2013: 34).

In fact, as Deniz Kandiyoti puts forth, social movements worldwide "point to profound crises of representation, redistribution and legitimacy" and "challenge the limits of formal democratic representation" either in corrupt and kleptocratic authoritarian regimes or in "nominally democratic regimes where the citizenry nonetheless feels disenfranchised and deprived of voice" (Kandiyoti 2014: 10; also see Della Porta, Diani 2006: 8; Melucci 1996: 113). One of my informants stressed the character of the June upheaval as an expression of a need for change in the way politics is made: "Gezi was a rather important grassroots movement, and had really important claims. It gave quite important political messages to the society and political institutions. But the organized politics in Turkey did not take the lesson. That is why Turkey missed the chance in two elections. Presidency elections and local elections... In fact, Gezi showed people that politics is not just party, parliament and government; it should not be that way. Millions of people who are not active in politics took part in and they shaped the character of the resistance. For me, organization is highly important; but political organizations in Turkey still have the claim to lead the masses and represent them. Gezi swallowed all those claims! It made the flag obsession of each political group ridiculous. With their flags even renowned political organizations could... among the millions... have a space, the best as big as the top of a pin".<sup>7</sup>

Although Turkey has had a republican democracy since 1923, political manoeuvres in the direction to consolidate power in one hand by JDP government in the last decade signalled invalidation of all democratic mechanisms, together with a clear abdication of secularism in favour of a Sunni Islamic choice. The political scientist Ayşen Candaş says that "consolidating powers [in one hand] is a regime type that mobilizes from the top down, is elitist and does not have a democratic relation with its paramilitarized grassroots; on the contrary, it has a blind obedience relationship with its masses and thus the party may also revert to a narrative that claims to know the interests of the regular people better than they do. In fact some pro-AKP [JDP] theologians made speeches pointing to this direction after the election".<sup>8</sup> Candaş also claims that Turkey has already had "a 'secret constitution' in place and in this constitution, there is no room for basic rights or freedoms, no room for equality, check and balance mechanisms, independent institutions, supervision, accountability and transparency".<sup>9</sup>

### A Brief Overview to Feminist Struggle in Turkey

Women, both feminist and non-feminist, have had a long struggle for democracy and rights for equal citizenship,<sup>10</sup> which started to be taken up seriously in the 1980s by well educated middle and upper middle class women many of whom have also challenged state-defined feminism and sought for their own voices in the course for liberation. The 1980s and 1990s was a period when any feminist argument used to be answered with

sarcasm and verbal attack, if not demonized; besides, as Handan Koç stated, people in different political circles tended to underestimate feminist attempts for several reasons, above all by interpreting women's reflexive thinking on their own lives as a bourgeois influence coming from the west (Koç 2005: 105). Afraid of such unfriendly attacks, at that time, before expressing their ideas many women in everyday encounters used to start their talk saying "I am not a feminist, but...". Looking retrospectively, it can be said that women, then, cleverly chose a liminal position against being discredited as 'feminists' and it was a strategy to avoid humiliating attacks. In the 1990s, several institutional establishments and sprawling grassroots activism increased the interest of women from different segments to feminist agenda. Since the 1990s on, besides Women's Studies Centers in universities, many feminist organizations such as Mor Çatı, Uçan Süpürge ('Flying Broom'), Amargi have been established and together with the publications such as *Feminist*, *Pazartesi* ('Monday') and *Amargi*, they helped the diffusion of feminist ideals and aspirations among women. In late 1990s and early 2000s advertising industry tried to make profit out of that potential and addressed women by creating images of free, liberated and independent women as consumers; and at least in big cities a kind of quasi-feminism developed in parallel, which contributed to the visibility of young women in public and professional life as well.

Though some refer to a decline in women's movement in some parts of the world today (e.g. see Epstein 2015: 348), the picture is a little different in current Turkey. Women constitute the main and one of the most dynamic activist elements in social movements. Although the provocative discourse of the state actors - that reflects a systematic and intermittent political and cultural fight against women's equality ideal - had an important impact on that, it is undeniable that three decades of feminist activism has influenced the public agenda. It seems that feminist activist groups and women's organizations managed to reach women, voicing women's issues with hardly any institutional or social support. A survey conducted for the mainstream newspaper *Hürriyet* in 2015 shows that 86% of women in Turkey express their support to groups that advocate women's rights (A&G 2015: 75). That immense support from women also implies feminist/women's organizations success in bypassing the polarizing discourse of the state actors.

The feminist activist Hülya Gülbahar interprets the political and cultural fight of state actors against women's equality ideal especially after 2010 as a rupture in republican history since women today have to struggle for things - e.g. education, employment, legal equality - that they had gained much before with the introduction of secular laws. According to her, JDP rule aimed to consolidate patriarchal model and spread it to the whole society.<sup>11</sup> In earlier political periods of the republic, women were confined to certain roles with patriotic missions, but those periods have always been referred to as rather women-friendly, allowing women space in public sphere. In terms of democracy, women's rights and liberties, political discourse and associated implementations

have changed dramatically at least since 2010 and many women – whether they call themselves feminist or not – continue their struggle for the amelioration of the situation. Handan Çağlayan claims that Erdoğan's obvious complaints about and attacks on feminists show the strength of the movement feminists created together with other women in the last decades. For their common interests, many times together with other women, feminists have managed to coordinate collective effort to interrupt government agenda, take position, form a sound oppositional voice and get some results;<sup>12</sup> they also strengthened their relations with global women's movement and shared experiences.<sup>13</sup> In 2014, the government actors established their own women's NGOs in order to marginalize long established feminists' and other women's organizations and eliminate their interference to government agenda. My informants Ela, Bahar and Elif referred to that as one of the biggest problems for feminist struggle since these NGOs created directly by the state elites might potentially distort the agenda according to the needs of the government and help weaken the struggle by polarizing women from different political tendencies (also see Ayata 2015: 27).<sup>14</sup>

"JDP discovered that it has to have its own women's organizations. Just like it has its own judges, its own teachers, it should have its own women's organizations... I think their number will rise or rather new branches... can be established because they like power in one hand. Or they will establish different organizations dealing with other issues... They will spread to Turkey... They cannot eliminate us totally, but their relationship is really bad with us. They don't invite us to meetings... although we are just one of a few relevant organizations. They do not want to hear any voice criticizing them... Beforehand [during the rule of the first JDP government] they had another approach accepting women's organizations' experience... now they switched to another discourse, attacking feminists, directly targeting women's organizations... Far from supporting us, they try to eradicate our existence... But they also need us. They need to say 'We talked to non-governmental organizations, women's organizations' for the hegemony, for their justification... We are not acting within the limits they desired... otherwise they will try to incorporate you... They created their own approved women's organizations, as they created their own approved women (*makbul kadın*)... Feminists are a threat because each power has its own approved women. Republican period, JDP, Reagan, Pope, they all had their "approved" women.<sup>15</sup> And feminists are a threat to the acceptable women and family construction JDP tried to establish. JDP has a politics to institutionalize family and integrate it to the state... you are a direct threat when you say 'Don't protect the family, but the women'".<sup>16</sup>

### Women's/Feminists' Participation to June Upheavals

All my informants reported that they were aware of the Gezi resistance at the very beginning and many of them took part in the protests quite regularly. They all said that their mothers, fathers, other family members, relatives, friends, colleagues and

acquaints supported them and many of these people also joined the protests. Three of my informants said that they had the chance to meet and talk to people who disagreed and criticized the protestors. Aslı reported her observations about those people in that way: "Building a shopping centre, I guess, is considered normal by many people. They think it is a sign of a new Turkey economic development and growth. I know a group of modern middle class educated people who pay attention to the economic successes of JDP; they are not Islamist, rather they resemble the profile the former Motherland Party had.<sup>17</sup> I know that poor segments do not have any assertion for that issue... but they [more affluent profile] think that these kinds of things should not be refused. They think the protestors are people who resist in any case. They [the protestors] don't understand economic growth, they don't understand that the transformation is for good... either because of their obsessions, or because of their organizational affiliations or because they are deceived, they were motivated... a commonplace idea in such cases is that 'They are good people, but they are deceived'. They said that 'It is fanaticism... they try to give harm to the state'. However, the majority of the people thought that the state exceeded its line of legitimacy".<sup>18</sup>

Deniz reported that she was surprised to see such a heterogeneous mass and thousands of protestors flowing to Taksim: "It was a Thursday, I usually work on Thursdays, but since Monday we had been watching the happenings in Gezi Park. I was at work. From social media, twitter, there was a rather strong call [to Taksim], but we didn't go to any call like that. I left my workplace and went to Taksim. All the roads were blocked, but we took the motorboats, etc., and when we were there, there was nothing yet. I mean the evening of the day when Sırrı Süreyya [an MP from the opposition] went in front [of the bulldozer] and stopped destruction. And the first of when we saw people walking across the [Bosporus] bridge, and never ending confrontations... I asked myself 'Oh, what is happening?' There was no cortege, I was not under any flag, but I felt that I had to be there. For me Gezi meant that I had to be there, it was as a matter of conscience. Only to be there, to be able to describe it, as a testimony. And the belief that things might change... In fact I saw how strong, how creative we [protestors] have been, how splendid we have been. And I realized that those groups that usually cannot stay side by side now they could do that. I watched with amazement how things happened in the direction that we thought, said and wished so much, theoretically, but could not manage in practice. It was a grassroots movement that I still have difficulty to interpret, to explain. [...] We already had an anti-JDP positioning as it meant more to the right, conservatism and Islamic fascism each day. Beyond a threat or an anxiety, now something infiltrating into institutions, constricting our life spaces, our everyday practices and our rights... A power too much dictating to us; it was a day for confrontation with such a power. That day was the very day for all and Gezi Park [transformation project of the government] ignited it. [...] It was an experience of spontaneity involving great determinisms in it. People saw that determinism itself

could be spontaneous, unpredictable, disorderly, emotional and massive".<sup>19</sup>

The majority of my informants reported that well educated young and middle aged men and women were noticeably visible in the park especially at the beginning of the events; it was not much surprising as that segment has had to face precarious work conditions that led to loss of social and economic status in the last decade (see Saraçoğlu 2015: 169-70). Yet, the following nationwide protests in streets, squares, public transports, neighbourhoods, balconies, graduation ceremonies of universities and high schools could never be attributed only to a certain class, gender or age group. Considering some early comments about the middle class character of the protests, as Deniz remarked, it was necessary to underline the complex and uncategorizable character of 'the middle class' in current Turkey: "I cannot call it middle class, because I think the basis of middle class in Turkey for long years have been undermined. I cannot describe myself as middle class. Neoliberal money politics first established insecurity through relegation of middle class. Making you indebted... you cannot plan future. People there [in Taksim/Gezi Park] had insecurity. There were people who did not have known secure working practice of the middle class... much impoverished... 20-25 years ago education meant economic welfare, but now people often say 'Did we study for nothing'. A JDP period praising ignorance... Fairness according to qualification is displaced... Grave cadre settings in public offices... Mistrust to public institutions increased. This state is militantly ruled for 12 years. That influenced the cultural history of classes. Children of middle class families were really angry because they thought the unhappiness they have been in is created by the hegemonic crisis JDP created, and they were right".<sup>20</sup>

Though Gezi Park is sometimes generalized as the revolt of middle classes who lost their earlier privileges, Deniz and all my other informants pointed out that it could never be reduced to the reaction of a certain class or a certain segment. Resistance comprised a highly heterogeneous mass (Kuymulu 2014b: 180; Saraçoğlu 2015: 144); yet, it seems that women, LGBTI groups and many young people have had specific reasons, as the mainstream political discourse in Turkey in the last decade specifically used a rather exclusionary and marginalizing language against women, LGBTI groups and young people. These groups saw a top down paternalist, misogynist, sexist, homophobic and ageist conservatism triggered by state actors as a primary threat to their lives, rights and choices. They are not seen as equal citizens of republican Turkey, but rather transformed into the objects of hostile political discourses by scolding, despise, defamation through TV screens, which immediately found reflection in everyday encounters. Feminists are demonized; young women are blamed for moral social corruption if they laugh, talk, use their mobile telephone or go out while pregnant. Prime Minister Erdoğan himself complained to his electorate about journalists, unionists, protestors, students or feminists and attacked them several times. As my informant Aslı pointed out, whenever he was questioned, criticized or opposed especially by a woman, he showed more intolerance and could not refrain from bullying either individually or together with



his electorate:<sup>21</sup> "There is a pure fascist attitude here... when he says 'hit her' [referred to a journalist]... he sees an immoral woman there. She is impudent, she exceeds her limits. He scolded the woman journalist... because they hate women's liberation. That new Islamist ideology gives legitimacy to men's hatred. He made the distinction chaste and unchaste women visible through his headscarf discourse. He implies that the one without a headscarf is unchaste. Why?... We don't have to show respect to all headscarfed people. Really, it is not demanded in Qur'an... And nothing else in Qur'an is teased out so much".<sup>22</sup>

A research shows that 87% of the protestors in the Park reported to have felt themselves as part of groups whose rights are violated or who are subjected to unfair treatment (Konda 2014: 16). As some feminist activists and scholars pointed out,<sup>23</sup> the massive contribution of women and LGBTI groups had a determining influence on the upheavals. They changed the language and the character of the politics in streets dramatically with their presence, vision and humour. For women and LGBTI groups it was a matter of life and death, as they were the first objects of political and in turn social attacks including brute violence. A potential regime change could make the picture even worse for these groups. Though they are less disadvantaged, we must add young men to that picture, as JDP gave precedence to a rather classical patriarchal social order, where, beside women, young men also lose autonomy under age hierarchy. In addition, many of these young women, men and LGBTI individuals have had to work and live under conditions that are worse than those earlier generations had. Demanding their life to be at their own disposal, many young people refused to be entrapped by authoritarianism<sup>24</sup> in any sense and they simply rebelled. By being put in a lower rank in social hierarchy they are subject to the control of the others who are deemed higher just because of their age or gender privilege.<sup>25</sup> Top down authoritarian conservatism seems to promise something especially to pro-conservative elder generations, by promoting a strictly hierarchical society where the ones who are put below according to gender and age parameters are forced to obey the others.<sup>26</sup> Anxious about their social, economic, political and legal rights, women, LGBTI groups and many young men especially from secular segments become the visible components of the protests, demanding their rights and liberties as citizens since they are forced to obey an oppressive social and political gerontocracy for no reward.

Young people and especially women become the main concern when government actors regularly target certain practices in their declarations in public and private TV channels, and in turn marginalize people who do not comply with their authoritarian conservative imposition e.g. about marriage, child birth, abortion, caesarean practices, extra marital partnership or alcohol consumption. With clear conservative discourses and practices, the state actors have systematically polarized people along age and gender lines as well as along lines of we-them, religious-secular, sunni-alewi, feminists-mothers and so on. Young women are encouraged for early marriage and recommended to comply with a

reserved/submissive role within the family; for conflict resolution, Islamic counseling (*irşad*) services are established, which signaled a shift from a secular to a religious reference. Women from different generations have felt threatened by that expanding political discourse that targets regulation of the intimate sphere, and in turn control women's bodies and lives. Many of my informants expressed that these seemingly tiny interferences in privacy and liberties motivated individual woman to take part massively in the demonstrations.

Though young men and women have long been blamed for 'degeneration', no government before JDP has made it a primary concern; discourses of polarization through blaming of a certain segment for social corruption have always brought sound reaction from conservative electorate. Young men and women become the scapegoats in a moralist discourse and that continued even after June upheavals. For example, as soon as Erdoğan criticised them for being or living together as boys and girls, young people were immediately stigmatized and criminalized by morality supervisors; they became the target of police's and others abuse of authority.<sup>27</sup> Just after Erdoğan's speech, in some districts university students were thrown away from the apartments they rented and had difficulty in finding new ones. Meanwhile, the police stormed some houses at night, and a young boy who visited his girlfriend in a small town died falling from the balcony, trying to hide from 'moral' interrogations of the police and the neighbours.<sup>28</sup> LGBTI individuals have been bullied and brutally killed, while newspapers and journalists known as close to the government go on using hateful speech towards them.<sup>29</sup> The incidences of femicide have risen dramatically in the last decade and it is not even possible to get reliable statistics.<sup>30</sup> Some feminists tend to link it with government's lack of will to take genuine and sound solutions.<sup>31</sup> Rather the politics of gender inequality and the associated discriminatory discourse government actors adopted are considered to have encouraging impact on perpetrators (Dinçer 2015: 22; Ayata 2015: 26).<sup>32</sup> Many feminists link the increasing cases of femicide or the threats to women's right with JDP's (anti-) women policy and related discourses. Looking at the systematic manipulative, 'moralist', sexist public declarations by statesmen, it is often claimed that the third JDP government has promoted discrimination, hostility and hatred towards women, particularly towards the feminists (Özkazanç 2015: 24-25; Öztan 2015: 39).<sup>33</sup>

Women, especially feminists have had a long history of democratic struggle for equal rights and representation, a struggle against deeply rooted sexism and discrimination in every aspect of life including the legal system, through which women could normally get some sort of support or compensation. Rather, several times women witnessed misogynist attitude of legal authorities as well as the politicians and the others. While telling about their tough struggle for the amelioration of the articles in the new Turkish penal code, Bilge pointed out a similar hostile attitude they faced and women's reaction to that: "The most successful campaign we carried out was that for meliorating the

Turkish penal code... we had collected a lot of experience. Two years ago we started to study it; that was the first time we studied law. But we were just a handful of women going to Ankara, lobbying. During the times when there were severe discussions we had... the politicians, academicians... legal authorities who talk against women's rights could not even do shopping in supermarkets. Everywhere, in markets, in downtown, while walking in the street women interrogated their approach".<sup>34</sup> Referring to 86% of women expressing their support to women's organizations in the survey conducted in 2015 by A&G research company, Bilge also stated that she did not think of such a high rate of thrust for any civil movement either in Turkey or in the world today.

Without social, political, economic and legal support, feminists have long struggled for democracy and subversion of deeply rooted mechanisms of inequality. Yet as Carole Pateman put forth, for feminists "democracy has *never* existed; women have never been and still are not admitted as full and equal members and citizens in any country known as a democracy" (as cited in Eschle 2001: 1-2). In their struggle for democracy women cumulated important amount of experiences, as the majority of my informants noted, these experiences have had inevitable consequences, either directly or indirectly in the lives of newer generations. Catherine Eschle claims that women's complex and consistent exclusion and marginalization within democratic ideas and institutions help them "generate insights into how social life could be made more democratic" (Eschle 2001: 11). According to her, "feminists continue to strive for inclusion on a more equal basis and to construct alternative democratic forms through mobilization in movement politics" (Eschle 2001: 1-2): "Because movements are forms of political activism in everyday life, capable of bridging the public/private divide, women can participate in them without abandoning their gender roles and traits. The feminist movement is seen as particularly crucial because it politicizes the public/private divide, enabling women to act collectively to contest gendered power relations in the public arena and to legitimize their individual struggles in the home" (Eschle 2001: 226-227).

Studies show that women take part in social movements in greater numbers than in democratic institutions (Eschle 2001: 229). It is not much surprising when considering women's long established exclusion from decision making processes in political parties as well as in unions or other democratic institutions (Çakır 2014). June protests meant the possibility of more space and democracy for women. One of the most popular feminist demands for space in public life which is expressed with the slogan 'We want nights and streets as well' was realized;<sup>35</sup> it was pretty legitimate for women from all ages to be out all night long and some women enjoyed night out maybe for the first time in their lives. "Streets became the real political sphere for those who are excluded from decision making processes" (Kömürcü 2014: 84), including women, LGBTI individuals and young people from different sections: "At least half of them [protestors] were women... I guess, women struggle more bravely when they believe in something... Mothers were also there. There were women saying 'Our children are

here, we are here!' Because in this country women are oppressed more... and it [Taksim square] was a sphere, they could be there. Because it was a liberating sphere... they could sleep outside; they could struggle all together with men for the things they believed in; they could chant the slogans they liked. In that respect, the atmosphere provided freedom for women. That made it possible for women to join although going out to streets late has been a difficult issue for women in Turkey... [Government's] policies over women... some women seem to accept that; some totally reject it. On the other hand, we see women independent of their class or political vision... trying to stop violence... they are also subjected to... Who wants to be unequal? Who wants to earn less? Who wants to be confined to the house and subjected to violence? They all raise the pressure over women... Just like young people, women also have great disadvantages in employment... They are unemployed, even if they work they don't have insurance or security, they earn the half of the amount men get... so it is pretty normal to see women in the streets".<sup>36</sup>

Many people referred to the massive, active, independent, assertive and initiating role of women in June upheavals. As one of the protestors claimed, protection of the rights in public spheres was highly important for women: "Public sphere is gradually shrinking and that shrinking spaces usually remain to men; they become manly spaces mostly. In Turkey public spheres were never women friendly; but now there is a misogynist transformation of public sphere. Re-winning the spaces like Gezi Park, both for women's public existence and for being there together as men and women is more vital for women than for men; in the end even if men cannot take alcohol, they can still exist there in the street. Women have more benefit from re-winning of the public sphere" (as cited in Baytok 2013: 63).

Though women have always constituted an important element of democratic struggles in Turkey, before June upheavals they had never been so patently mentioned as the notable agents of a nationwide political issue. Yücel Kayıran claims that different than earlier historical examples of the political engagements of women, young women during June upheavals were not subordinated as before in the 60s and 70s; rather they became the primary agents in many cases, though they had their boyfriends or male compeers beside. Comparing that with the political positioning of Kurdish women, he asserts that women's agency in June protests distinguished itself as an individually determined subject positioning whereas Kurdish women have become not individual, but collective subjects as the bearers of Kurdish national problem (Kayıran 2013: 105-106).

However, women's increasingly visible agency in the last three decades has been already remarked, especially in earlier and ongoing environmentalist public protests both in urban and rural spheres. Women have been rather active and it became common to see them in the fronts challenging private companies, the police or the gendarme. There were female peasants of all ages, involved in huge numbers in peasant struggles against gold search with cyanide in Bergama, against establishment of hydroelectric power

plants (HES) e.g. in Tortum, Gerze as well as in other districts or against demolishing of olive trees in Aegean region.<sup>37</sup>

Since the beginning of the upheavals, feminists coordinated together and organized in a tent in Gezi Park. Feminist women's presence has had several positive and constructive impacts on the movement and the groups there. First, with their concrete positioning in tents in Gezi Park feminists have given a clear political message about their oppositional stance to government politics. A specific tent also made communication and exchange possible between women from different generations, both feminist and non-feminist. When people needed communication e.g. for coordination, they could always find people in the tent. Second, they had the chance to contact other groups; that allowed cooperation and dialogue, helped feminists to remark and restrict sexist and exclusionary swearword use and to transform the language of protestors by organizing activities in order to promote a non-sexist language use. In this respect, they had to struggle within struggle. And third, at some critical moments feminists helped conflict resolution and eliminated potential fights between antagonistic groups: "Feminist interventions proved surprisingly effective mainly due to the genuine efforts of feminist and women's groups that have had a significant role in the history of Turkey's post-1980s civil opposition and due to the *sui generis* dynamics of Gezi, which has turned the traditional understanding of state-citizen relationships on its head for the first time in Turkey's history in such a short period of time... [S]pontaneous and timely interventions of feminist and LGBT groups into the language of the resistance (slogans, chants, posters, and written and verbal statements), prevented the potential marginalization of the protests because of the swear words that targeted Erdoğan and the female members of his immediate family by different sections of society and in the media".<sup>38</sup>

Upheavals reflected a moment of revolution, a will for social and political change, a desire for living independent of any authoritarian imposition. It is commonly expressed as a reaction to top down interference to lifestyles, which in fact targeted a comprehensive change in all institutions of society: "Erdoğan's government tries to transform society working in two areas, education and women. And those two areas are always in their agenda. First, women always see a man scolding them... interfering everything they [women] do... provoking men [against women] at home, at work and in society. That was the most important factor that influenced women's participation in Gezi resistance. Second, just before Gezi the word 'two drunkards' [Erdoğan's provocation of secular opposition, addressing Atatürk and his successor İnönü as drunkards] became quite influential. Besides, there was another factor... they [government elite] always targeted 2023, but one month or 15 days before Gezi, they expanded their target and articulated 2071<sup>39</sup> [for their rule and the reshaping of new Turkey]... That influenced women a lot... They had the panic that they would never leave... Women from all segments thought... 'We will die and our children will live with them'... 4+4+4 [education reform]

helped exclusion of women from education, and the society did not resist that enough. When that happened women could not give a strong reaction, but they saw each day how 4+4+4 influenced their lives and children's lives... they tried to adopt a ceaseless systemic collapsing and reorganization, transformation of ordinary schools to Imam and Preacher Training Schools, de-qualification of education each day and the imposition of superstitious, non-scientific material in the name of religion. That disturbed many women. They had to give their children in the hands of a political vision they didn't approve, and that vision indoctrinates their children all day long".<sup>40</sup>

All my informants expressed that feminist struggle in Turkey and in the world directly or indirectly influenced women in Turkey and helped diffusion of feminist ideals in society.<sup>41</sup> The majority of my informants expressed that they see feminist movement as one of the most dynamic and constructive movements of the last 30 years, which has had impact on the consciousness of women and men. Making gender inequality an issue in political agenda, feminist movement in Turkey and in the world took a rather progressive, constructive step in political struggle. Yet, it has not been easy to change the antidemocratic and unequal running because, as Bilge pointed out, women have systematically been excluded from all decision-making mechanisms in all spheres of life, and male authorities never seemed willing to change things towards a more democratic direction. Some even expressed their discontent and frustration with the limiting reactionary positioning that JDP regime's discriminatory discourse and implementations pushed feminists in. Especially during the third JDP rule, they had rather non-productive, draining, yet inescapable relation with the government; for some of my informants, this repressed more fruitful attempts that could offer sound solutions to women's problems. Some others said that it was inevitable and they were obliged to organize reactionary oppositions to the attacks coming from the state actors, as they gravely threatened the rights women had already gained; otherwise, without controversial reactions to legal proposals, political declarations, or the implementation of certain regulations, in current Turkey the situation for women could be even worse. Now, at least after 30 years of women's struggle, feminist ideals have been diffused in society and become remarkable in the lives of women especially in big cities. Therefore, if there were not for a long established feminist struggle demanding women's full social, political and economic participation, most probably women could not manage to be part of the upheavals in such striking ways. It was the success of both the diffusion of women's feminist struggle in society and the anger cumulated in time against the politics of "transforming women into docile slaves of the family"<sup>42</sup> whose bodies are instrumentalized, who are not accepted as equal citizens, but rather forced in a dependent, subordinate, submissive role of breeders and carers by being dictated to have at least three (or rather five) children. Fortunately, new generations of women have already learned directly or indirectly from feminist knowledge that there are alternatives to family under patriarchal male authority and they refused to drop the

rights they already had. Elif expressed how their activities and public talks motivated, encouraged and empowered young women they had the chance to meet. Bilge said that she has learned a lot from women in small towns as they continued interrogating their lives and relations with the motive they gained from feminist struggle. Aslı reported that after at least 30 years of systematic challenge, feminists have managed to form a women-to-women line and their impact could be seen in rather different fields: "For example a rather famous actress... she does not let her partner suppress her... She behaved in ways that became also good example for women... Today under oppressive cultural and political conditions, daring to take risks, celebrities do exemplary things. When I see a young celebrity emerging with a décolleté dress, giving impressing smart talks, I inevitably think that it is the impact of feminist struggle [she refers to the invalidity of attractive woman vs. intelligent women dichotomy]... Sure it is important that Turkey has had secular laws. We have had a long period under secular regime, and its impact is so huge over women".<sup>43</sup>

Up until 2010, feminist groups worked hard to influence policies of the state in a progressive direction, and state actors until then seemed to have agreed to cooperate with feminist organizations. Some organizations entered in deep cooperation with some state actors believing that they could convince them to ameliorate women's rights in the legal system; in the end, any progress would be a step. However, despite seemingly promising negotiations, step by step it turned out into a blind-fight, taking women activists nowhere while wasting all their energy. In the end many feminists felt deceived by state actors who steered to a more authoritarian rule and some feminists interpreted every regression in policy as an open fight against women on many levels, including the symbolic. For example, the word 'women' in laws, regulations and institutional names is systematically replaced by the word 'family', and despite reactions from feminist organizations this trend continued with many other women-unfriendly state policies; women are denied to be the individual actors of their own will. Erasing the word 'women' and replacing it with 'family' could not be considered a simple name change, as Esen Özdemir puts forth; rather it referred to a grave change in government's policy for women (Özkul 2013: 62).<sup>44</sup>

The new policy of JDP targeted empowerment of the family at the expense for women's full instrumentalisation for family, children, husband and the state. This project is severely criticized by feminists as it does not allow women any space for self-realization and encourages men to resort to violence if women disagreed. Many of my informants expressed how regulations in the last decade have deteriorated women's chances of education and employment, and encouraged early marriages. Though the aspiration to make Turkey a member country of European Union made the first JDP government quite progressive in cooperation with women's and feminist organizations, during the second and especially the third JDP governments, any feminist demand for the amelioration of women's position in social, political, economic and legal arena was adamantly

challenged. With their discourse and implementations, government actors started to threaten women undercutting the ideal of equality simply declaring the opposite by bending their arguments to a rather religious terminology. The Prime Minister himself collected women and feminist activists from different non-governmental organizations to Dolmabahçe Palace in July 2010 and with a brave and intimidating manner claimed women's inequality on their faces.<sup>45</sup> Such declarations of state actors have had a top down impact on society leading to harsher conditions awaiting women.<sup>46</sup> Women are denied their rights over their own lives, their own bodies; instead, they are demanded to accept the 'natural' role in their essence (*fitrat* in Islamic discourse), deeming a submissive, subordinated, constrained life away from the public proper for female population. For women being addressed as unequal in each occasion is regarded as an attack to their dignity. As Aslı pointed out, such political maneuvers helped encourage misogynist expressions in society and increase fear and anger of conservative men against women who talk, laugh, flirt, or make decisions about their own lives.

Systematic women unfriendly, discriminatory and segregationist discourses and practices of the government actors in the last decade signalled a dramatic retreat in women's rights discourse and in the idea of equality; seeing their basic rights under threat, a huge number of women got engaged in the upheavals. Surveys showed that women composed 51,5% of the protestors in Istanbul and 50,8% in Gezi Park (Konda 2014: 5). They had an active and leading role during the upheavals by resisting as well as by providing health care to the wounded, legal support to the arrested, food and first aid equipment to the ones resisting in the park or neighbourhoods and even fireproof kitchen gloves to throw the coming gas bombs back.<sup>47</sup> Besides, women constitute the great majority of the ones who marched in the neighbourhoods, supported the protests from windows and balconies making noise with their kitchen equipment. It is worth noting that in Istanbul, after the students, housewives emerge as the biggest group in protests (Konda 2014: 11), and this could be anticipated considering women's massive participation in the protests against anti-abortion campaign of the government as well. Fatma pointed out the political potential women have had in current Turkey referring to the huge participation of women to the protest feminists organized one year before the Gezi resistance, in June 2012, against the anti-abortion campaign.<sup>48</sup>

During June protests women had the chance to express their anger against confining misogynist discourse, which rejects women's control on their own lives. Bilge reported that she knew several women determined to join protests despite they sometimes confronted the objection of their husbands or sons: "Though the majority were young, women from all ages took part in the struggles in streets. There were young people from all sections. For example, I saw women from three generations; a mother, her daughter and granddaughter; they were together in the street... Here [in her neighbourhood] all aged elderly women were in the streets... There was a... I guess she was a textile worker, they were five people; she was in the front, and she was leading the group, the rest



were boys. She led while the slogans were shouted, she decided everything... where to go, which common slogans they should adopt... They were maximum 18, not yet 19, they were 17-18. She was leading and how terribly swearing, I cannot tell... She had a terrible anger and terrible swearwords... There [in front of the Dolmabahçe Mosque], immediately a first aid corridor was created. Half of them were women... Almost half of the medical staff in the mosque was women when I entered the mosque at around 02.00 am... I know a family, a Turkish woman married to a Kurdish man for 40 years. The woman wants to go to Taksim the first night. Someone calls them from the balcony... but the man does not join. She takes part in all demonstrations she could make on foot... Now she is cross with her husband since he left her alone".<sup>49</sup>

It is worth noting that differently from the 1990s, in the 2000s work conditions especially for women have changed dramatically. Professional middle class found dramatically precarious working conditions, some become unemployed, or others had to accept poor payments and precarious working conditions. A recent study by Bugra and Özkan shows that unsteady employment policies today target unqualified, disorganized, flexible low paid labor of women, which depletes the empowering impact of employment for women (as cited in Osmanağaoğlu 2015: 10).<sup>50</sup> Aslı reported that she remarked a sharp decrease in women's visibility especially in professional fields and pointed out a related deterioration in women's economic independence: "[The most important issue is] independence, economic independence, outside family, because everything depends on it. You cannot flee from the despotism of ISIS [Islamic State], you cannot deal with politics and in order not to be the slave of the family, economic independence is indispensable... but because of market based organization many cannot have education... get a job. For the masses this is the biggest issue now. Ten years ago it seemed different. Everywhere there were women journalists. Plazas were full with women. Everybody used to say that this issue [women's employment] had been solved. In 2000 there was a picture like that. They used to mark women professionals in work life, women were everywhere in work life... but now the poorest, the worst positions. They [government actors] changed the settings, they made a new setting... made promotion difficult for women, so women prefer not to work. I think so... They don't want working women... Republicans were tolerant of women's presence in the working life: they should work, but they should not neglect their children. But he [Erdoğan] says 'whoever builds kindergarten, s/he finds old people's home'...<sup>51</sup> because they hate liberated women".<sup>52</sup>

As Aslı argued, women need economic independence to take part in social and political life. However many women are still strictly dependent on their families and lost within family structure: "Women want to provide education to their children with the money they earned. They ignore themselves. We [feminists] should have an ideology that fires women's dreams for liberation; we need a renewal of that... For JDP women's empowerment is families' empowerment. They say women have their place in the

family. We say it is not the family! The best flaw that feminists could make is to say 'leave your family aside and try to empower yourself. Even if you are married... even if you have children, you have a lover, or you adore a man, the issue is not that. It is your past and future'... The layer at the very bottom must be broken so that new things can come up, new people, new men and new women can emerge".<sup>53</sup>

For some of my informants it was clear that new generations of men and women would be different anyway. For example, Bircan referred to a huge difference between women in her generation and young women today. For her, that was something promising for the future: "[Young women] are aware of everything. I belong to the generation of September 12 [military coup in 1980] and just after. Think about the lack of technological devices and social media. We were living in a rather blunt and angular world... Many of us did not know foreign languages so we could learn what happened in the world only from the interpretations of people who got the chance to learn them... Now they have the chance to meet and exchange a lot. We had illegality conditions... In my generation people refrained from... telling that she was a feminist, she was a revolutionary; otherwise you would be excluded and you could not find a job... Besides, my generation had no body awareness, we just new heterosexuality... new generations are aware of everything".<sup>54</sup>

Though young women and men seek for a channel to express their dissatisfaction with social and political regulations that affect their life dramatically, it seems that feminist organizations or other established conventional political platforms have not been much attractive or satisfying for many. Women in Turkey have usually had an ambivalent relationship with feminism as they agree with the feminist ideals, usually adopt them in their lives, but refuse to identify themselves with any political institutional closure. That might be partly because of the way people organize themselves in political structures and partly because many people seek solutions pragmatically for their immediate needs, to which present democratic civil-organizational structures do not fit in. It was possible "to feel part of a movement without identifying with any specific organization and, indeed, even express an explicit dissent towards the notion of organization in general" (Della Porta, Diani 2006: 99). June protest showed that without institutional closure, politics could be possible. People made it with a new language, a new vision, a new humour, which are not yet incorporated institutionally. By ignoring conventional political means, parties, flags, age hierarchy, ranks, and leaders, by not taking politicians seriously, as women and men they undermined the established privileges and exposed the problem of legitimacy in current representative democracy (see Vassaf 2015: 277-278; see also Melucci 1996: 113-114). Della Porta and Diani claim that: "social movements are formed to express dissatisfaction with existing policy in a given area. Environmentalist groups have demanded intervention to protect the environment; pacifists have opposed the culture of war; students have criticized selection and authoritarianism in education; the feminist movement has

fought discrimination against women; the world social forums criticized neoliberal globalization. Although it is usual to make a distinction between political and cultural movements, the first following a more instrumental logic, the second more symbolic, all movements tend to make demands on the political system" (2006: 229).

Even upheavals in the centre of Istanbul could not capture the attention of mainstream media. While TV channels in Turkey emitted documentaries or entertainment programs as if there was nothing newsworthy, people from highly different segments, and age groups experienced a new sociability, a communal public life in a plurality of voices, learning from each other in a highly democratic atmosphere immune to authoritarianism. That led people to create their own media, and beside establishment of new alternative media, many independent individual emissions were provided. Similarly, people made music, art, theatre, sport and many other activities there in the park. Bircan expressed her amazement with the way young women and men make politics in the streets with horizontal organizations, ignoring age, gender, or class distinctions, doing without leaders or privileges, with a new language and new methods, daring to be romantic, caring about all living things, refusing to use violence, and all together managing to be a collective body; she confessed that that was something they could not manage in the 1980s. She put forth that gerontocracy has been so diffused in society that reciprocal prejudices have prevented exchange of knowledge and information between generations a lot: "My generation underestimated them [young people] a lot. Although they didn't have any right to do that! I did not understand why they did so... You cannot compare the conditions of September 12 with today... These people [young people] proved themselves and we gave them their dignity. Of course we did not have such a right... Anyway they showed us how mistaken we were in our perspective. They did much better than we did in the past. I have a lot to learn from them".<sup>55</sup>

Protestors managed to form a kind of horizontal association both at individual and group level. It reflected a demand for change in politics in parties, unions, NGOs, and so on, many of which imitate a rather hierarchical structure with a leading figure and in this respect resemble a lot to the state or the government they attempted to criticize. The scope and the style of the protests showed the need for alternative democratic platforms. Though politicians, both the ones in power and the ones in opposition, prefer to stay blind to that, there emerges an inconvertible direction of women opposing the way politics is done conventionally, and as Yeşim Tuba Başaran claimed, the existence and institutionalization of feminist movement give power and direction to the resistance of women (Başaran 2015: 32) and of the new generations.

### Concluding Remarks

The majority of my informants reported that they found feminist movement successful in the long run, both on the global and on the local scale, especially when they compare it with many other political movements. Women from all generations took part in

the protests as the principal elements; feminist organizations were there, and they had a determining and moderating role especially at some specific moments. Despite the immense participation of women, it is claimed that women's potential is still not fulfilled. Nevertheless, it was surprising to see a massive number of women independent of any political engagement taking part in the protests, demanding their liberty and rights as citizens. Although many young women do not need to name themselves as feminists today, they do not either reject it. Compared to the situation in the 1980s, feminist struggle today has gained great legitimization. Under systematic attacks and demonization, it was not easy to see the impact of feminist struggle over people, but June resistance showed that feminist struggle on the last 30 years found some reflection in the lives of women. Fatma said that during the upheavals they saw the results of their decades long efforts. She expressed her amazement when she saw so many women who adopted and reiterated the arguments and chanted slogans they had introduced in the last 30 years, and that they thought had reached only a small number of women. Seeing their slogans uttered by those in Taksim, as Fatma reported, feminists have recognized that they are heard and remarked, and that in the end their long lasting efforts have had some impact on social consciousness.

When Gezi Park was evacuated by riot police, people started to find other ways to coordinate themselves and they organized forums in their neighbourhoods parks and there they continued talking about their lives and common problems. Though more than three years have passed now, feminist forum of Yoğurtçu Park is the one that still survives and women continue discussing the issues concerning them and the whole society.

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#### NOTES:

1 - See also Ö. Altıok, *Results of Turkey's General Elections: A Brief Gendered Analysis*, in «Gender & Society», 11 June 2015: <https://gendersociety.wordpress.com/2015/06/11/results-of-turkeys-general-elections-a-brief-gendered-analysis>.

2 - Cenk Saraçoğlu (2015) provides a detailed analysis of how these changes have been implemented together with a hegemonic appropriation of 'rights and democracy' discourses in the last twelve years by Justice and Development Party.

3 - Parallel to that there were also plans to empty and demolish Atatürk Cultural Centre, which has had a symbolic significance as one of the central cultural institutions of the republic.

4 - He became the President of Turkey after the presidency elections on 10 August 2014.

5 - It is worth noting that in order to pacify the resistance in Gezi Park it is even claimed that the plan was to make a new park there.

6 - One of my informant Elif also referred to people's comments about 'apolitical' or 'middle class' character of the protestors, which she interpreted as a misleading, but desired picture about them.

7 - Interview with Bilge, 52 years old, 18 June 2015, Istanbul. In order to preserve anonymity, the names of the informants have been changed.

8 - Y. P. Doğan, *World's Priorities Do Not Match Turkey's*, an interview with Ayşen Candaş, in «Today's Zaman», 26 July 2015: [http://mobile.todayzaman.com/monday-talk\\_academic-candas-worlds-priorities-do-not-match-turkeys\\_394675.html](http://mobile.todayzaman.com/monday-talk_academic-candas-worlds-priorities-do-not-match-turkeys_394675.html).

9 - Ibid.

10 - Women have always taken part in social and political movements, at least since the modernization period of late Ottoman and following Republican Period of Turkey, but compared to men they were somehow less visible as political actors. Since the mid 1980s, women's organization around feminist circles changed that picture a lot. Since then both feminist and non-feminist women as political subjects with their own agenda managed to form independent political platforms in public life. For a detailed analysis of women's struggle with magazines and associations during Ottoman period see Çakır (1996).

11 - Ö. Ş. Keyif, *Arınç'ın 'Kahkahası', İŞİD'in Saldırıları...*, an interview with Hülya Gülbahar, in «Birgün», 4 August 2014: <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/arinc-in-kahkahasi-isis-in-saldirilari-66537.html>.

See also Ö. Altıok, B. Somersan, *Building "a New Turkey": Gender Politics and the Future of Democracy*, in «Open Democracy», 23 March 2015: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/%C3%B6zlem-alt%C4%B1ok-bihter-somersan/building-new-turkey-gender-politics-and-future-of-democracy>.

12 - It is worth noting that though women have long organized 8 March parades and taken part in 1 May parades, in the last decade the police have started to be tougher towards women who have taken part in street demonstrations. This might be linked to government's growing intolerance to women demanding their rights in streets as equal citizens.

13 - H. Çağlayan, *Eşitlik Adalet Hegemonya*, in «Bianet», 1 April 2015: <http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/163444-esitlik-adalet-hegemonya>.

14 - See also Ö. Altıok, B. Somersan, *Building "a New Turkey": Gender Politics and the Future of Democracy*, in «Open Democracy», 23 March 2015: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/%C3%B6zlem-alt%C4%B1ok-bihter-somersan/building-new-turkey-gender-politics-and-future-of-democracy>.

15 - For an interesting discussion about womanhood ideals of different political regimes see Papanek (1994: 45-46).

16 - Interview with Elif, 33 years old, 16 June 2015, Istanbul.

17 - It was the central right party that initiated the neoliberal program with the introduction of free market economy and associated privatization of public institutions in the 1980s.

18 - Interview with Aslı, 54 years old, 16 June 2015, Istanbul.

19 - Interview with Deniz, 33 years old, 03 June 2015, Istanbul.

20 - Interview with Deniz, 33 years old, 03 June 2015, Istanbul.

21 - For some relevant examples see *Erdoğan gazeteci kadını azarladı*, in «İlkeli Haber», 7 August 2014: <http://www.ilkelihaber.com/index.php?id=5588025&tad=Erdo%F0an%20Gazeteci%20Kad%FDn%FD%20Azarlad%FD>; *Başbakan Kadın Sendikacıya Ayağa Kalkarak Tepki*, in «Radikal», 15 June 2013: [http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/basbakan\\_kadin\\_sendikacinin\\_uzerine\\_yurumus-1137703](http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/basbakan_kadin_sendikacinin_uzerine_yurumus-1137703); *Kız mı Kadın mı? Diyen Erdoğan'a Büyük Tepki*, in «T24», 4 June 2011: <http://t24.com.tr/haber/kiz-mi-kadin-mi-diyen-erdogana-buyuk-tepki,149108>.

22 - Interview with Aslı, 54 years old, 16 June 2015, Istanbul.

23 - Ö. Altıok, B. Somersan, *Building "a New Turkey": Gender Politics and the Future of Democracy*, in «Open Democracy», 23 March 2015: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/%C3%B6zlem-alt%C4%B1ok-bihter-somersan/building-new-turkey-gender-politics-and-future-of-democracy>; H. Gülbahar, *Gezi Süreci ve Kadınlar*, in «Sosyal Demokrat», 29 August 2013: <http://www.sosyaldemokratdergi.org/2013/08/gezi-sureci-ve-kadinlar>.

24 - One of my informants Aslı reported that she preferred 'fascism' claiming that 'authoritarianism' is a rather soft adjective to describe JDP rule which she saw intolerant to any alternative voice or lifestyle.

25 - A recent study conducted in Turkey shows that LGBTI individuals are highly suspicious about getting fair treatment through legal means and lack of thrust leads them to refrain from seeking justice. See V. Yılmaz V., İ. Göçmen, *Summary Results of the Social and Economic Problems of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) Individuals in Turkey Research*, in «Research Turkey», 25 June 2015: <http://researchturkey.org/summary-results-of-the-social-and-economic-problems-of-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transsexual-lgbt-individuals-in-turkey-research>.

26 - This strategy on the other hand helps conceal class conflict, allowing poor elderly man enjoy superiority over youngsters and women.

27 - See Ö. Altın, *Başbakan 'Emriyle' Evi Basıldı*, in «Evrensel», 08 November 2013: <http://www.evrensel.net/haber/71600/basbakan-emriyle-evi-basildi>.

- 28 - See E. Özmen, *Üniversiteli Gençin İnanılmaz Ölümü*, in «Milliyet», 26 December 2013: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/kizli-erkekli-ev-tartismasi/gundem/detay/1813493/default.htm>. It is impressive to see how fast some social actors adopt new political discourses and force change in directions desired by state actors.
- 29 - On 6 June 2015, a public announcement from *Milli Görüş* Group ('National Vision') is published in 16 newspapers, many of which have already become notorious for their biased position as media organs of JDP government. Entitled as 'We are on behalf of Our Values', the announcement targeted LGBTI groups and used a clear hate speech against them; see İ. Özdemir, *Milli İrade Platformu'nun "Biz Değerlerimizin Tarafındayız" Başlığında Verdiği İlan, 16 gazetede yayınladı*, in «Anadolu Ajansı», 06 June 2015: <http://www.aa.com.tr/tr/secim-2015/532305--quot-biz-degerlerimizin-tarafindayiz-quot-ilani>. And parallel to that, public notices in the streets emerged inviting people to penalize and silence homosexuals. Columnists of several newspapers also contributed that hate speech. See D. Güneş *Yeni Şafak Yazarı Karaman, Eşcinsellere Savaş İlan Etti*, in «Demokrat Haber», 21 June 2015: <http://www.demokrah Haber.net/lgbti/yeni-safak-yazari-karaman-escinsellere-savas-ilan-etti-h50648.html>; for an earlier news also see Y. Tar, *Akit Mahkemede Homofobiyi Savundu, Beraat etti*, in «Bianet», 26 March 2014: <https://bianet.org/bianet/medya/154453-akit-mahkemede-homofobiyi-savundu-beraat-etti>.
- 30 - Feminist activist Hülya Gülbahar makes striking calculations and comes to the conclusion that the statistics of femicide provided by state authorities could not be reliable and she claims that it must be much higher than reported: see H. Gülbahar, *Şiddet Rakamları Gerçekleri Yansıtmıyor*, in «T24», 25 June 2013: <http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/hulya-gulbahar/siddet-rakamlari-gercekleri-yansitmiyor,7895>.
- 31 - My informant Elif claimed that women's organizations have collected important amount of experience and have known how to eliminate male violence, but because they are not in decision-making positions and because they could not convince the authorities in those positions, it has been difficult to take precautions or implement sound solutions.
- 32 - This idea is expressed in a slogan by IFK and first used during a meeting organized by Erdoğan: "More of us are being killed when you say we are not equal" see B. Belge, *Women protest PM Erdogan in Women's Meeting*, in «Bianet», 8 November 2010: <http://bianet.org/english/gender/125938-women-protest-pm-erdogan-in-womens-meeting>; also see Ö. Ş. Keyif, *Ariçe'nin 'Kahkahası', İŞİD'in Saldırıları...*, an interview with Hülya Gülbahar, in «Birgün», 4 August 2014: <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/arince-in-kahkahasi-isisid-in-saldirilari-66537.html>.
- 33 - T. Ellialtı, *Resist With Tenacity, Not With Swear Words: Feminist Interventions in the Gezi Park Protests*, in «CritCom», 8 January 2014: <http://councilforeuropeanstudies.org/critcom/resist-with-tenacity-not-with-swear-words-feminist-interventions-in-the-gezi-park-protests>.
- 34 - Interview with Bilge, 52 years old, 18 June 2015, Istanbul.
- 35 - H. Koç, *Gezi Direnişi ve Kadınlar*, "Handan Koç Yazıları", 10 October 2013: <http://www.handankoc.com/gezi-direnisi-ve-kadinlar>.
- 36 - Interview with Bahar, 35 years old, 04 June 2015, Istanbul.
- 37 - For women's active participation in environmentalist peasant movements see D. Bayram, B. Güler, *Sakin Ol ve Kadınlara Atfettiğin Sıfatları Yavaşça Yere Bırak*, in «Bianet», 14 July 2015: [http://haber.sol.org.tr/turkiye/buralar-bizim-ve-buralar-ozgur-kalacak-olsek-vermeyiz-122483](http://bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/166016-sakin-ol-ve-kadnlara-atfettigin-sifatlari-yavasca-yere-birak; Buralar Bizim ve Buralar Özgür Kalacak, Ölsek Vermeyiz</i>, in «Sol», 11 July 2015: <a href=); also see *Tortum'daki HES'e Durdurma*, in «Bianet» 23 March 2012: <http://bianet.org/bianet/cevre/137156-tortum-daki-hes-e-durdurma>.
- 38 - T. Ellialtı, *Resist With Tenacity, Not With Swear Words: Feminist Interventions in the Gezi Park Protests*, in «CritCom», 8 January 2014: <http://councilforeuropeanstudies.org/critcom/resist-with-tenacity-not-with-swear-words-feminist-interventions-in-the-gezi-park-protests>.
- 39 - In their public notices and declarations as a reference to the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the establishment of republican Turkey, the government first articulated 2023 as the target for the reconstruction of 'their new Turkey', whereas 2071 meant a 1000-year planning with reference to the conquest of Anatolia (Minor Asia) by Turks. With those references, JDP also tended to incorporate more nationalists elements in its discourse.
- 40 - Interview with Bilge, 52 years old, 18 June 2015, Istanbul.
- 41 - For example after long and tough struggles of feminist women, male violence today is known to be a political issue and could no longer be justified easily as it was before in the 1980s.
- 42 - H. Gülbahar, *Gezi Süreci ve Kadınlar*, in «Sosyal Demokrat», 29 August 2013: <http://www.sosyaldemokratdergi.org/2013/08/gezi-sureci-ve-kadinlar>.
- 43 - Interview with Aslı, 54 years old, 16 June 2015, Istanbul. Aslı also pointed out the moralist and 'bigoted' vision that secular Turkish regime have had about women.

44 - This has reflections in cultural life as well: for example there is a long lasting controversy over how to name a woman: while many conservatives refrain from using the word *kadın* (woman) itself as they themselves attributed negative connotations to the word itself, they replace it with *bayan* (Mrs) or *hanımefendi* (lady). However, with the object of regaining the name *kadın*, the word *bayan* is severely rejected by feminists and during demonstrations on 8 March it is widely protested together with the analogy between women and flowers. Feminists rejected politicians' and opinion makers' confining descriptions of women as 'flowers' in recent March the 8th parades with a sarcastic motto "*Kadın kadındır; Çiçek babandır*" ('A woman is a woman; the flower must be your father').

45 - See *Kadınla Erkek Eşit Olamaz*, in «Vatan», 20 July 2010: <http://www.gazetevatan.com/-kadinla-erkek-esit-olamaz---318006-siyaset>.

46 - Parallel to that, ministers, MPs and other state actors have given systematic sexist and discriminatory declarations e.g. saying "Because women seek for jobs, unemployment is high" or "When women are educated, men cannot find women to get married to".

47 - H. Gülbahar, *Gezi Süreci ve Kadınlar*, in «Sosyal Demokrat», 29 August 2013: <http://www.sosyaldemokratdergi.org/2013/08/gezi-sureci-ve-kadınlar>.

48 - Knowing from their own experience that it is in the end a burden mostly put on women's shoulders since it is not common for men to take responsibility for their sexual intercourse, even the women who voted for JDP before started to interrogate women-unfriendly policies and anti-abortion campaign of the male government actors. Eventually the state actors could not manage to legalize abortion, yet women could not manage to stop the *de facto* prohibition of it either. Though abortion is still legal, women have had hard times to get service in public hospitals in the last few years; and that happened just after PM Erdoğan's pro-natalist, anti-abortionist and motherist explanations, that is supported equalizing an abortion with the military operation in Roboski/Uludere, which resulted in 34 deaths. See *Başbakan: Her Kurtaj bir Uludere'dir*, in «Radikal», 27 May 2012: [http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/basbakan\\_her\\_kurtaj\\_bir\\_uluderedir-1089235](http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/basbakan_her_kurtaj_bir_uluderedir-1089235).

49 - Interview with Bilge, 52 years old, 18 June 2015, Istanbul.

50 - See also T. Ellialtı, *Resist With Tenacity, Not With Swear Words: Feminist Interventions in the Gezi Park Protests*, in «CritCom», 8 January 2014: <http://councilforeuropeanstudies.org/critcom/resist-with-tenacity-not-with-swear-words-feminist-interventions-in-the-gezi-park-protests>.

51 - That declaration is followed by a sharp decrease in the number of kindergartens in public institutions in 2010.

52 - Interview with Aslı, 54 years old, 16 June 2015, Istanbul.

53 - Interview with Aslı, 54 years old, 16 June 2015, Istanbul.

54 - Interview with Bircan, 54 years old, 11 August 2015, Istanbul.

55 - Interview with Bircan, 54 years old, 11 August 2015, Istanbul.

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