

Editors' Introduction

Volume 64 of *New Perspectives on Turkey* is the second issue of this journal produced during the COVID-19 pandemic. While our lives continue to be turned and twisted in various ways, this volume, with its rich and diverse content, is testimony that we are settling down with the “new normal.” This volume brings together four independent articles and a mini dossier consisting of three articles and a lengthy introductory essay. The independent articles cover populism and elections, conflict resolution and women, collective memory and national identity, and finally climate change and public health. The final article is one that contributes to the nascent scholarship in Turkey on the impact of climate change. As editors we are happy to lead the discussion in this field and we will try to pursue it in the future.

The mini dossier, guest edited by Cenk Özbay and Kerem Öktem, became increasingly topical as the articles were being processed. At this writing, the increasing visibility and mobilization of the LGBTI community since the turn of the century is confronting a serious backlash. Attacks against women's demands for equality and attacks against the LGBTI community have been on the rise especially in the past few years. On the first day of 2021, the President of Turkey made a top-down appointment to the rectorship of Boğaziçi University, which triggered protests by its students, to which the government has responded by arresting and demonizing the protestors, especially LGBTI individuals. More recently, on March 20, 2021, the President pulled the country out of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, better known as the İstanbul Convention, through a late-night presidential decree. These acts are the most recent examples, and in a way, just the tip of the iceberg, in the government's increasing gender conservatism and authoritarianism. Hence, the mini dossier is a very timely attempt to critically reflect on these developments.

The first article of this issue is by Osman Şahin on populism and elections, a topic that has global reverberations in countries across the globe from India to the United States, from Russia to Brazil. As social scientists around the world are grappling to understand the ways in which populist regimes generate support, Osman Şahin studies the 2015 general elections in Turkey which were held twice within a period of five months. He argues that by triggering perceptions of ontological insecurity through the Kurdish issue, the ruling populist Justice and Development Party (AKP) managed to increase its

support substantially from June to November of that year. Our next article, written by Ayşe Betül Çelik and Zeynep Gülru Göker is on conflict resolution and women. The authors offer a perspective on dialogue strategies employed by women in the polarized setting of Turkey. They show how women of different identities move among alliances as they surf different topics and use covert and indirect language to navigate through polarizing issues and mobilize gender issues to move to shared experiences. The third article by Nadav Solomonovich is on collective memory and national identity. It offers fresh new insights on an ongoing process, a new national holiday and the collective memory to which it refers that is in the making. The article studies the process of the memorialization of the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016 and how the government has been utilizing this occasion to reconstruct a new collective national memory that does not revolve around Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The fourth independent article is on climate change and health. İlhan Can Özen combines climate data with public health data to understand the relationship between aggregate mortality and temperature increases. While he argues that Turkey's old age mortality patterns are vulnerable to the effects of extreme heat, Özen also emphasizes the significance of regional differences in the country especially in terms of economic development and the capacity of local health systems.

The next set of articles are part of a mini dossier on "Turkey's Queer Times." These three articles, as Özbay and Öktem explain in their introductory essay, testify to an ongoing transformation taking place in Turkey in regard to sexual minorities. As they remind us Turkey is a country where same sex sexual acts, counternormative sexualities or gender nonconformism are legal. Moreover, especially in the 2000s scholarly and public attention for sexual dissidents and gender non-conforming individuals and their life worlds has been on the rise, as their spaces of mobilization and circulation also have. Özbay and Öktem name this the "queer turn" of Turkey. While our guest editors take note of this conjunctural process, they are marking the significance of the contemporary moment at which this opening looks rather vulnerable under increasing social and political sanctions towards this visibility.

The first article of the mini dossier by Evren Savcı is a theoretical contribution which discusses the epistemic challenges of studying Turkey's queer times. The article observes that Turkey's queer times are marked by the marginalization and "queering" of variously respectable subjects in the name of Islam and a strong LGBTI organizing against such marginalization. Savcı discusses the challenges of studying these counter processes by pointing towards a theoretical problem of the concept of "queer" operating as a tool of colonial modernity as it spreads to the "non-West." Savcı says that studying Turkey's queer times has the potential to truly transnationalize queer studies.

The second article in the mini dossier is by Deniz Aktan. This is an article that discusses how the soccer field in Turkey, perhaps one of the most male and heterosexual spaces of all, has become a site of resistance for queers within the last decade. Individuals belonging to gender and sexual minorities have founded queer-identified amateur teams and organized alternative, anti-normative leagues in several Turkish cities. Aktan says such queering of the football field is exemplary of a space of possibility for an inclusive and participatory social life. The closing article of the mini dossier by Yener Bayramoğlu compares two authoritarian turns in Turkish history, the 1980s and the 2010s. It traces queer hope and visions of future in these two periods and shows how queer hope manages to infiltrate mediated publics even in times of pessimism and hopelessness. While both periods were characterized by heterosexist and discriminatory pressures, queer hope provides resilience for queer citizens, sexual minorities, and non-normative bodies, and it is this optimism that enables them to struggle in the present and develop tactics to flourish in the future.

In November 2020, we lost Bruce Rankin, a friend, an NPT author, and an important scholar of social inequalities in Turkey. His sudden death was a shock for his colleagues and friends. Murat Ergin, in a memorial essay in this volume, celebrates Bruce Rankin's life and scholarship and allows us as the *New Perspectives on Turkey* community to pay our respect and cherish the memory of a dear friend and great colleague.

In this volume, we also have a rich book review section. Authors Ronald Grigor Suny, Dilek Barlas, Fırat Genç, U. Ceren Ünlü, Hazar Hürman and Pelin Sönmez introduce six interesting and important books to NPT readers. We also invite readers to follow the NPT blog (accessible through the journal web site) to read short scholarly commentaries on recent events.

Biray Kolluoğlu
Deniz Yüksek