

Women and local power: processes of mobilization and female political pathways in Turkey

Type: Doctoral dissertation

Author: Lucie Drechselová

Institutions: Charles University and EHESS, Paris

Year: 2018

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the issue of women's under-representation in local politics in contemporary Turkey. The intermediary level of politics – party presence in municipalities – is studied with a double approach distinguishing among political parties (AKP, CHP, MHP, and the pro-Kurdish HDP & DBP) as well as among cities (Izmir, Trabzon and Diyarbakır). The Anglo-American body of literature in political sociology is put into dialogue with the French research in the fields of sociology of mobilization, of political elites and of institutions. Gendered perspective is transversal to the whole thesis. Field work was done in 2014, 2015 and 2016 in Izmir, Trabzon and Diyarbakır and took the form of non-participant observation and semi-directed interviews with two hundred female municipal councilors and women holding an intra-party office. Conceptually, seeing parties as heterogeneous entities allows us to study exchanges that take place within the party hierarchy. The place and role of women in the candidate selection processes questions the artificial separation between the “local” and the “national”. Throughout the demonstration, it becomes clear that women's profiles and political carriers are intrinsically linked to modalities of their access to electoral mandate, which in turn determines the ways in which women embody their role as elected figures. The distinctive party ethos contribute to privilege specific individual and collective strategies over others. The research concludes with the finding that in order to understand the levels of women's local representation as well as its modalities, the “party” criteria has bigger explanatory value than the local configurations, even though these two perspectives are *in fine* inseparable.