



Social Welfare Provision at Local Level: A Case Study on Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

Prestação de assistência social a nível local: um estudo de caso no Município de Istambul

Elif Sinem ARIKAN¹

Abstract: In this article I tried to find traces of a neo-conservative model the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in Turkey. Firstly I tried to explain significant collaboration between liberalism and conservatism in the neoliberal context. Subsequently, I tried to evaluate the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality to see the neo-conservative administration's effects on local administrations based on market-oriented administration rationale. I tried to explain that the gender discourse was strengthened because of such administration rationale. I tried to evaluate this matter profoundly. I mentioned the Ladies Commission of RP (Welfare Party) and Kadın Koordinasyon Merkezi (Women Coordination Center (WCC)) in the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality as examples of models of conservative women's political organizations.

Keywords: Neoliberalism. Local welfare provision. Women's organizations. Istanbul.

Resumo: Neste artigo eu tentei encontrar vestígios de um modelo neo-conservacionista no Município de Istambul, na Turquia. Em primeiro lugar eu tentei explicar a colaboração significativa entre liberalismo e conservadorismo no contexto neoliberal. Posteriormente, tentei avaliar o município de Istambul para ver os efeitos da administração neo-conservacionista sobre as administrações locais com base na lógica da administração orientada para o mercado. Tentei explicar que o discurso de gênero foi reforçado por causa de tal lógica da administração. Tentei avaliar esta questão profundamente. Eu mencionei o *Ladies Commission* de RP (Partido de Assistência Social) e *Kadın Koordinasyon Merkezi* (Coordenação do Centro de Mulheres, sigla WCC em Inglês) no Município de Istambul como exemplos de modelos de organização político conservacionista das mulheres.

Palavras-Chave: Neoliberalismo. Provisão Assistência Social local. Organizações de mulheres. Istambul.

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¹ Research Assistant of Department of Social Work of Kocaeli University (KU, Turkey). Master's Degree Student. E-mail: <esinem.arikan@kocaeli.edu.tr>.

Collaboration between liberalism and conservatism has started being debated with the neoliberal period. Firstly it is necessary to explain the relation between neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism. Neo-liberalism appeared as an assertive and inclusionary idea, theory and ideology; making interpretations about individual, society and state at the last quarter of the 20th century. This discourse can be described as a challenge to the interventionist social welfare state. On one hand it brings political, social and economic liberalization and on the other hand it is attached to new identity politics to reunite the fragmented upper political structure. The substantial conciliation between social groups (proletariat and capitalists) is collapsed by the new rightist ideology where a new model called Reaganism/Thatcherism substituted the social welfare state. Free market economy and smaller but powerful state are two main baselines of this new Project. (ÖZKAZANÇ, 1997 p. 21). In 1980's, the social welfare state is criticized on the basis of increasing social welfare expenditures and increasing expectations of citizens. Neoliberalism is built on criticism of social welfare system (KORAY, 2001, p. 9). The influence of capitalism's crisis in 1970's was tried to be overcome through a reconstruction with neoliberal model just like the previous world crisis (ŞAYLAN, 1998; İNAÇ; DEMİRAY, [2004], p. 22).

It is necessary to evaluate the alliance between neoliberalism and conservatism for understanding the new rightist ideology which started to rise with neoliberalism. Neoliberalism carries the concept of neo but it has conservatist elements in its core. Hayek, who is one of the most important philosophers who contributed to the construction of neoliberalism, indicates that there are traditions in the base of communities. New rightists' discourse is a complex structure in which limited state, free market economy, economic efficiency, individuals' demand of freedom and neo-conservatists' perception of law and order that is based on authority and tradition are intertwined with each other. Neoliberal ideology carries liberal components and conservatist components in itself. When we look at liberal components, we see the following:

- 1) Individual
- 2) Right to freedom of choice
- 3) Free market society
- 4) Principle of laissez-faire
- 5) Limited power of government

On the other hand the conservatist components are

- 1) Powerful government
- 2) Social authority
- 3) Disciplined society
- 4) Hierarchy
- 5) Nationality (BELSEY, 1994; İNAÇ; DEMİRAY [2004], p. 22)

The new rightist ideology comprises conservatist components like authority and discipline

as well as liberal components like freedom, justice. It seems like a synthesis of liberalism and conservatism. This synthesis damaged the principles of social democracy (ÖZKAZANÇ, 1997, p. 31). In England, the state subvention for health services, education system and mass housing projects started to decrease with the Thatcher government. On the other hand the reason for becoming poor and unemployment is attributed to irresponsible individuals with Thatcherist ethical perspective. Individuals and individual initiative were deemed as postulat with Thatcherism (İNAÇ; DEMİRAY, [2004], p. 22).

Thatcher's famous statement is not forgotten: There are no societies. For Thatcher, there is no alternative except for free market system and privatization for the protection of national interests. She said that there is no alternative. Neoliberalism is seen as one way (İNAÇ; DEMİRAY, [2004], p. 22). As a similar model, Reagan's first move is evicting the clients from residential care organizations. Because the clients in these organisations were seen as parasites (İNAÇ; DEMİRAY, [2004], p. 22). These kind of problems are not considered among the state's authorities. The role of finding solution is assumed by the market system and NGO's with governance model.

When the state's role of social welfare started to be limited, the social problems started being solved by social network. In this case, the conservative discourse became widespread, at the same time the importance of family, philanthropic individual and community also became widespread. In this period religious community network gained strength. In the neoliberal context, philanthropic aids habituated the people to poverty and addicted the people to philanthropic organizations instead of eradicating the poverty. The World Bank is the most important actor of this process. Poverty reduction strategy and governance model are developed by the WB. Governance model is referred to collaboration of state, market and NGO's. In this model the state is seen as a small and efficient executive organ that ensures social order for market economy. / The reason of this approach is that the state has more obligation than it can bear in social welfare model. The state's obligations started to increase after the economic crisis of 1970's. Developing the collaboration with the market and encouraging the participation of NGOs to decision-making procedure are considered as remedies for this (ŞENKAL; SARIİPEK, 2007, p. 147-151). In this period, philanthropy obtained a institutionalized and legal identity as a distinctive feature. The reason for philanthropy becoming widespread is the necessity of including poor people in the system who work for capitalism and market economy. In this sense, philanthropy makes capitalism permanent. According to Bill Gates, "[...] a benevolent citizen [...]"; in the last century the world is changing for the better, but billions of people cannot benefit from the miracles of capitalism. According to Gates, the innovation in two fields is necessary for this purpose. One of them is philanthropy, the other one is developing products and services for public interest. It is named as creative capitalism by Gates. Creative capitalism's feature is compounding the benefit by way of poor relief. In this context the capital dominates society. The reason behind the rise of philanthropy is the necessity of including poor people in the system for the

functionality of capitalism and market economy (AKYILDIZ, [2006], p. 14). In brief, philanthropic conception gains strength because of new rightist ideology's conservatist discourse. For this reason, the right-based qualification of public service is trivialised. From this point on, the perception of citizen also transformed. For the new rightist ideology, social welfare state promotes a citizen who is addicted to central administration, irresponsible, lazy, rebel, manipulative. By contrast thereto, ideal citizen form developed. This form refers to more active, entrepreneur, responsible, law-abiding, mature and reasonable citizens. Thatcherism suggests active citizenship as a tool for social integration. Active citizenship sees individual success, performance -degree of entrepreneurship in private space- as a determinant component of belonging to political structure. Ideal citizen of the new rightist ideology is a competitive, alone, ambitious economic person. Active citizenship has another dimension: Active citizens engage in voluntary works as a social and moral responsibility. For this perception a real social solidarity can be possible by this way (ÖZKAZANÇ, 2009).

Roughly, with neoliberalism, state withdrew from providing public services. This task is performed by philanthropic individuals and institutions. New rightist ideology's moral discourse and perception of citizenship strengthen this replacement. On the other hand neoliberalism brings new economic forms like precarious work, privatization which prioritise the market's interests. This situation caused increase of poverty. The words which have positive meanings are used to describe this process such as philanthropy, creativity, efficiency, productivity. However, behind the magic of these optimistic words, we see social problems, impoverishment, isolation and vulnerability of people. Compared to the most of the countries, neoliberalism's historical development has similar characteristics in Turkey. Neoliberalism started being mentioned with the AKP (Justice and Development Party) Government in Turkey. After the 2001 economic crisis, in 2002 general election took place in Turkey. AKP is supported by the majority. After elections, a legislation process started quickly. According to Ayşe Bugra, in this process, a capitalist society which bases on private property and free contract relations was founded and obstacles to market were removed, in the meantime, the government was taking measures to have the social problems under control, which were arising due to the reason of market economy. This situation caused a serious transformation of social policy. In Turkey, the state did not become smaller or did not lose its efficiency differently from the world conjuncture. In Turkey relationship between the state and society has changed. Perception of citizenship evolved to active citizenship as mentioned above (BUĞRA, 2007, p. 144).

Neoliberal administration is institutionalised with the AKP government in Turkey. We can say this also for local administrations. In this article Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is examined as an example. The social municipalism which created resource in 1970's changed after 1980 in Istanbul and in other cities. After 1980, the local politics changed because of the change in the relationship between the local and the center. The resource of local administration is increased by the central government. In Dalan's (mayor) period, project fetishism is seen in local politics of Istanbul metropolitan municipality (ERDER; İNCİOĞLU, 2008, p. 33). (see the table below for results of local elections for Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality)

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Table 1. Results of local elections for Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

Period	Political Party	Mayor	Voting Rate (%)
1984-1989	Anavatan Partisi (Motherland Party)	Bedrettin Dalan	49,69
1989-1994	Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti (Social Democratic Populist Party)	Nurettin Sözen	35,95
1994 - 1999	Refah Partisi (Welfare Party)	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	25,19
1999 - 2004	Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party)	Ali Müfit Gürtuna	27,52
2004 - 2009	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)	Kadir Topbaş	45,32
2009- 2014	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)	Kadir Topbaş	44,71
2014 - 2019	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)	Kadir Topbaş	47,9

Source: Supreme Electoral Council of Turkey².

In this period, market-oriented municipalism developed instead of a productive, creative social municipalism which were seen before 1980. Capital-oriented politics are implemented. Capitalists' fund became important for local administration in order to develop cities. Thus, the middle class supported the local administrations. Financiers invested in cities and took share in that. But then the cities' problems could not be solved. The cultural value of the cities was damaged because of project fetishism. Also polarization increased in city. Ghettos became widespread in the city. The ghettos, where poor communities lived in became the political activity area of the opposition parties. In 1989, SHP (Social Democratic Populist Party) leader, Nurettin Sözen won the local election. In SHP period (five years) projects were set up to struggle against poverty. This period is described as an interruption to project-based municipalism. According to Ali Ekber Dogan, neoliberal municipalism is a two-phased process in Turkey. The first phase is referred to ANAP local administration; the second phase is referred to a process that started with RP and it is still continuing.

In 1994 RP (Welfare Party) won the local election with the majority of the votes. The conservative discourse of RP became important in this victory. Another purpose of this article is evaluating women organizations in conservative local administrations. This is quite im-

² *Reosource: <<https://sonuc.ysk.gov.tr/module/GirisEkranı.jsf>>.

portant for RP. The Ladies³ Commission of RP has an important role in electoral process (ARAT, 1998; ERDER; İNCİOĞLU, 2008, p. 34). Before the 1989 local elections, RP adopted conservative solidarity models. Before the electoral process, RP used face to face interaction for organizing. At that point, the Ladies' Commission's effects were quite important. Thus, the ladies' commission created an alternative politization model by using traditional values, solidarity and socialization patterns. This commission tried to create an alternative society model. The women in middle class - especially recently immigrated women (After 1980 a lot of peasants immigrated to metropolitans in Turkey) - were politicized with this conservative-solidarist ethos. In this period traditional values and solidarity models in social area were carried to the political area. Women were mobilized for RP. Thus, the women's search of new social identity in conformity with traditional values caused the politization process. Actually, in RP's party program, there was no section dedicated to women that was different from CHP's and ANAP's party programs. In RP's party program, there was a section for family. However, this section did not mention women. The "women" was considered after 1987's elections. In RP, a group of party members defended the women's participation to party as a necessity. Istanbul provincial head Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was leading this group. Another group in the party was against encouraging women to work for party. According to this opinion, women should not be outside, women's place is their home. As from 1989, party members' wives, sisters, friends started to be trained for establishing ladies commission. There are different reasons for women's political participation. Ideas, values, ideals or interests can prompt women to take part in political sphere. Also religious belief can be an effective agent for political mobilization. The members of ladies commission emphasized that they were working for God's sake. These works satisfied women. Women mentioned of their political experience happily (ARAT, 1998).

When a journalist asked Necmettin Erbakan (leader of RP) why there are not women among the deputies of RP, the answer of Erbakan was that: "[...] Our women do not want to be dignitaries. They are working for God's sake. Deputies are doing good deed due to their works. This means that the women partake of the good deeds committed by their husbands." (ZAMAN NEWS DESK, 1996, p. 6).

In an article, author conducts interviews with women who work for RP during the electoral process. Statement of these women are important to understand the changemaking feature of gaining a party member identity in women's daily life:

High school graduate M. H. said that the political work is like an education for her. She met different people in this process and she acquired a new identity. Ç.H. said that she was deprived of her status after she had covered her head. She explained that she gained her status again in the party.

³ Lady is preferred to women in conservative discourse in Turkey.

I am always seen as deficient because of my headscarf. Most women who wear headscarf lived as locked in the house. They cannot receive education. They cannot work. They wanted to prove themselves. Now, I prove myself to my family, my husband due to this politization process. After that these women prove themselves to their families, neighbours, etc. For example, this woman became representative of the neighborhood where she lives in. This woman gained a status. She became important for someone. That was quite important. The most important feature of women's success in political mobilization is convincing women to vote for RP via face to face interaction. The women in commissions went to women's home where women spend most part of their time. A group of these women assigned themselves to visit the neighborhoods. They visited some buildings in this neighborhood to meet women in their houses. After that, the commission members determined the women who can share the party's vision and they planned visitings called as onpoint visitings. There was another way to contact women. Generally they found the women who are liked, respected by other women in the neighborhood. Firstly they contacted these women for reaching other women.

Traditional relationship is important to reach women in their homes where they feel comfortable in. The women in RP participated in women's traditional meetings. (Women especially housewives come together in houses to read quran. Also women groups meet periodically in a house of a group member.) In these meetings women talk about their problems also. Women in RP suggested solutions with their party member identity. Women in RP carried women's issues in private life's sphere to the political sphere. The women in the Ladies' Commission present the housewives to the political sphere as voters and militants (ARAT,1998). Women became visible within the boundaries of the party. They could not be efficient in the general policy area of RP. This situation is related to the rightist conservatist ideology. This ideological perspective identified women with social roles in the family as wife and mother. For this reason, women's political participation must correspond to the women's domestic roles. This participation can only be accepted as long as this does not cause a change in the traditional gender roles (SANCAR ÜŞÜR, 1997; ONAY, 2013). This organizational model of women was seen as example for AKP's organizational model.

The members of the ladies commissions continued working in municipality for RP after the elections. After RP's period, the winner of the later local elections -in 1999- was Ali Müfit Gurtuna from FP (Virtue Party) -consecutive party of RP-. After the Marmara Earthquake in 1999, a women's organisation was established under the presidency of Ali Müfit Gurtuna's wife Reyhan Gurtuna to organize earthquake relief. This organization is called Kadın Koordinasyon Merkezi (Women Coordination Center). The winner of the local elections in 2004 and 2009 was Kadir Topbaş from AKP. Today, the president of WCC is Özleyiş Topbaş who is Kadir Topbaş' wife. The basic service of WCC is providing aid to people in need. Firstly, mobile squads visit the applicants to determine the requirements of these people. After that, food, furniture, clothings, etc are conveyed to the people in need. Also, in WCC there are training courses for women; beadwork, embroidery stitch, etc. Also seminars are held about health, child care, etc. Also, there is a program called "let's travel and see". Everyday, travel-

ing is organized in Istanbul with 80 women to see museums and IBB's foundations [ISTANBUL, [2007]]. The majority of the staff of WCC is women. Organization's activities for women are seminars, vocational courses and excursions. In the activities of WCC, the family's importance is emphasized mostly. Central politics of AKP is family-oriented, similarly. For example, in 2011 the Ministry of State for Women and Family's name has changed to the Ministry of Family and Social Policies.

There are vocational courses in WCC. These courses aim providing job which contribute to domestic production. Women's gender role in the family is preserved. Also there are seminars about corruption in families, traumatism in broken families. For this reason, in these seminars the importance of keeping children away from the effects of the image in tv series like divorced women, girls who leave home and extramarital affairs is emphasized (ISTANBUL, [2007]). There is a change in themes of TV series in the recent years. At the end of the 1990s, there were willing, adventurer young people as characters in the TV series. Nowadays, in the TV series, the young women are getting pregnant easily as a result of extramarital affair. These women are forced to abortion or getting married with mature men who are shown as the rescuers (DEPELİ, 2012). The importance of family is emphasized in these series. The life outside family is shown as full of danger. Family has a role of preventing the visibility of social problems. Also family is seen as an obstacle to women's visibility. This family-oriented perception is observed in media, local administration politics, legislative acts, social policy implementation, social welfare benefits, etc.

In this context, the new rightist ideology which is a combination of economic liberalism and conservatism became efficient in municipalism since 1984 except for the interruption between 1989-94 (SHP period). Poor communities living in ghetto supported Erdogan because of traditional organizational practices, on the other hand project fetishism in the municipalism of Dalan maintained whereby the capitalists' fund canalized to urban investment. In 1999 Gürtuna's period and 2004 Topbaş's period municipalism are similar to Erdogan's period. Erdogan created possibility to the capitalists for making investments in ghettos in order to get the support of the middle-class. Also, Erdogan created a network via party's organization and religious communities. Thus, poor communities also supported Erdogan (DOĞAN, 2009).

The model of synthesis of liberalism and conservatism became efficient as from the middle of 1990's. Hence, I can say that there is continuity between AKP's municipalism and RP's municipalism. On the other hand there are also many differences between them. During the period continuing until February 28th, there were protests against the early republican period and secularism. In addition to these, municipalities of RP created new local practices that refer to traditional and cultural values of local community such as setting up iftar tents in Ramadan, organizing traditional public entertainment, holding collective wedding ceremonies, making free public transportation in religious days, etc. Also they tried to remove sym-

bols that belong to previous periods in public spaces. Important religious spaces for Turkish-Islamic culture are invigorated. In AKP's period, poor relief increased more. Municipalities provided public services like mass housing projects, public transport, etc.

In this period fluidity of neoliberalism and stability of conservatism ensued as an hybrid form. Ali Ekber Doğan conceptualized "*makeshift publicity*" to explain this political manner in municipalities. Makeshift publicity may be explained as such: Municipality buys service and goods from market instead of producing them, so that the pricing of goods and services become dependent on the market price. Thus, the public nature of the municipality's services becomes makeshift. The function of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's local politics became providing socialisation by way of traditional and cultural manners instead of developing the social welfare function. On the other hand, another dominant tendency of this manner is implementing local governance by laying emphasis on the principles of participation and transparency (DOĞAN, 2009).

The responsibility of this makeshift publicity is not municipalities and their ideology only. There are a lot of reasons like the failure of the leftist local administration which were elected in 1989 local elections, poor communities acceptance of poor reliefs, enrichment of local capitalists in 1990's due to global production network, etc. This is closure of horizon. This makeshift causes disappearance of modern publicity that is based on principles of citizenship, right to the city. These principles of modern publicity provides public participation of citizens to decision-making process about local issues. Makeshift publicity takes modern publicity's place because of this conservative municipalism.

AKP's municipalism is seen as an example of neoconservative municipalitism. In this article I tried to present traces of this situation. In Turkey, some authors defended that religious communities' solidarity network can cause a institutionalized social municipalism. Nowadays, the problems that are stemming from makeshift publicity are increasing day by day. Local administration bases on basic values such freedom, local autonomy, local participation, efficiency, equality, social welfare. As I tried to mentioned above, nowadays project fetichisme in local administration efface these values. Developing modern publicity in local administration is seen as an urgent necessity for the right-based public services, preserving principles of democracy and urban culture.

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