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EUROPEANISATION OF GENDER POLICY:

THE CURIOUS CASE OF TURKEY


by

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# Europeanisaton of Gender Policy: The Curious Case of Turkey

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## Abstract

This paper is a preliminary attempt to investigate the Europeanisation of LGBT movement in Turkey. Since the 1990s the public policy agenda of the European Union (EU) is dominated with 'gender mainstreaming' which aims to promote gender equality. Nevertheless, the literature concerning the EU's gender equality policy mostly concentrates on legal transformations, economic and structural changes in the EU member states. The problem, I argue, is that the literature on the Europeanisation of gender equality policies is eurocentric and mostly adopts state level systematic case studies and statisctical data. It has not yet met with the Europeanisation of domestic gender policies in candidate countries and to what extent non-state actors are included in this process. This research project, through a feminist perspective, seeks to critically analyse the EU's gender equality policy itself and its impacts on the political agenda of Turkish LGBT organizations. In this context, two fields of action outlined in the gender equality agenda of the European Union are primarily focused: Equal representation in decision making process and equal employment (European Commission, 2000).

**Keywords:** Gender equality, Europeanisation, European Union, Turkey, LGBT Organizations

**Introduction**

In the ongoing membership process of Turkey to the EU, perhaps gender equality policy is one of the most contentious issues in the adaptation process. Recent progress assessments on Turkey are positive in general (European Commission Progress Report, 2009). However, it remains unclear whether the influence of the EU's gender equality policy leads to specific changes in the political agenda of LGBT groups and on national gender policy of Turkey, as well. In the 2009 progress report the issue of gender equality in Turkey is given little attention and briefly mentioned under the topics of human rights, economic and social rights, anti-discrimination, social policy developments. What seems more problematic is that recent reports highlight the Europeanisation[1] process itself and tend to measure the level of democracy in Turkey due to the extend of compliance by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government and non-state actors.

The ongoing studies of gender policy in the EU range from the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming to the Europeanisation of member states' national bureaucracy (Mazey, 2006, 1998, Liebert, 2003, Kantola, 2010). European oriented perspective, large scale comparative case studies and quantitative data remain in possession in the research on the gender equality[2] policy of the EU. Similarly, research regarding the EU's gender mainstreaming[3] in its relation

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[1] I follow Héritier who defines Europeanisation as "the process of influence deriving from European decisions and impacting member states' policies and political administrative structures" (Héritier, quoted by Lenschow, 2006:58). Though there are various terms explaining Europeanisation as a mutual interaction between the EU and the candidate country, such as 'boomerang', I look upon Europeanisation as a 'top-down' process since the AKP government has to comply with the EU rules and regulations within the framework of the EU's gender policy. Though I do agree with the idea that Europeanisation does not imply an erosion of the domestic policies or overriding of internal processes (Liebert, 2003: 15-16).

[2] "Equality" is not a clear-cut term. Its contentious position is discussed by many feminist academics (Liebert, 2003; Meier, 2003; Kantola, 2010; Biström, 2010). According to Liebert (2003), the issue of equality is adopted either as an ideal or obsolete by the feminist movement. For instance, post-structuralist feminism is concerned with the de-construction of traditional binaries between woman and man rather than stabilizing them by equality measures and norms. Within the related literature 'gender equality' is defined many times: "One typology of models of gender equality distinguishes between models based on sameness (equal opportunities or equal treatment), on difference (special programmes) and on transformation (Rees 1998). A parallel typology distinguishes between models of inclusion, reversal and displacement (Squires 1999b, 2005)" (Walby, 2005: 325). Concerning the proposed project's aim to critically analyse the EU's 'gender equality' policy itsef and discuss the equal participation of LGBT people in the context of this policy, the Council of Europe's definition on 'gender equality' is adopted: "Gender equality means an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes… (Council of Europe, 1998: 7-8)" (Walby, 2005: 327).

[3] Gender Mainstreaming is defined as the implication process of the EU's gender equality policy in all areas and at all levels. In other words, its main goal is to achieve gender equality in employment, political decision-making, social spheres at both the EU and the national level (European Commission, 2000; Mazey, 2002; Liebert, 2003; Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2008; Kantola, 2010). Hafner-Burton and Pollack (2008) provides the definition by the Council of Europe: "the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of

to Turkey's candidacy is mostly concerned with the adjustments of regulatory rules and laws by both domestic governments and NGOs through the process of Europeanisation (Kardam, 2005, Lagro, 2007, Ertugal, 2005). In terms of gender equality policy in Turkey, only the recent developments performed by women's NGOs are taken into consideration most of the time.

Nonetheless, there has not been significant research on how LGBT organizations look upon the process of Europeanisation and the EU's gender equality policy. In that sense, the proposed research attempts to focus on more specific power relations among Turkish LGBT organizations, the EU and the current AKP government through the process of Europeanisation. More precisely, what puzzles me is if LGBT organizations in Turkey look upon the EU as a step to put pressure on the AKP government to improve its gender policy and thus, to actively participate in decision making and employment. To what extent is the LGBT movement in Turkey influenced by the Europeanisation process? What do LGBT organizations think about the EU's gender equality policy itself and are they willing to comply with it?

These questions above are highly relevant and interesting in terms of both contribution to the ongoing literature on the EU's gender mainstreaming and a personal quest to investigate the position of LGBT organisations in Turkey during the era of the EU candidacy. For me, Turkey is an interesting case in two ways: First, research on the Europeanisation of gender policy is under the hegemony of studies on the EU member states' national policies. Second, Turkey is facing the process of Europeanisation and strong patriarchal tradition at the same time. Eventhough patriarchy and religion are 'supposedly' repressive, LGBT movement and Europeanisation may operate in many different cultural settings and daily life contexts in Turkey. In other words, I am aware of the fact that both Turkish LGBT movement and the Europeanisation process might include religion and patriarchal relations somehow. However, I already assume that, despite new gender equality initiatives and measures taken within the framework of the EU's gender equality policy by the AKP government[4], LGBT organisations are mostly left out of the picture. They still experience discrimination in daily life, employment, decision making process and violence by the police depending on their sexual

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policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making" (Council of Europe, quoted by Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2008: 116)

[4] The AKP government is criticised by many LGBT organizations such as KAOS GL for being conservative and LGBT-blind in its gender policy agenda (for more: www.kaosgl.org).

orientation. The last progress report of the European Commission on Turkey (2009) shows that Turkish LGBT people are still discriminated in employment, political decision making and daily life. Existing national legislation does not provide for specific protection on the grounds of sexual orientation. LGBT people are still legally exempted from medical institutions and the military service. Based on this duality, the eurocentric[5] nature and women's NGOs oriented gender perspective in the ongoing literature, I decided to focus on Turkish LGBT organizations. I might be particularly lucky of having already existing contacts in Turkish LGBT organisations and also in the sense of spending years outside of Turkey which enables me to view Turkey from both outside and inside. The opportunity to see the picture as a whole from outside and to have contacts in Turkey, to be experienced about Turkish culture and having Turkish as a native language allow me to conduct such a research.

**Contemporary Debates**

The liberal intergovernmentalist academic Moravcsik explains European policy-making as "a process that takes place in two successive stages: governments first define a set of interests, then bargain among themselves in an effort to realize those interests" (Moravcsik, quoted by Hooghe & Marks, 1996:345). His description mostly concentrates on the role of the 'state' in the domestic preference formation, interstate bargaining and the creation of supranational institutions that were established to serve the nation-states' interests. However, the supranationalist model argues that the decision-making process at the EU level is multi-layered and thus, formed by different political actors at different levels. Thereby, in addition to national governments, non-state actors can influence the process (Hooghe & Marks, 1996:346). It seems that supranationalists are aware of the fact that the EU influences domestic policies of member states but fail to analyse the transformative process itself.

  However, there is a variety of theoretical debates to explain Europeanisation. According to Lenschow, Europeanisation is identified with respect to the direction of the process: "bottom-up (national state- EU), top-down (EU-national state), horizontal (state-state), and round about (national state-EU-national state)" (Lenschow, 2006: 57). Given the nature of the proposed research, Europeanisation is framed as a top-down process in which the impact of

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[5] I look upon the term "eurocentric" as a Western European countries oriented approach which mostly focuses on Western European countries such as Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium while excluding Central European Countries or the EU candidate countries such as Turkey.

gender equality policy of the EU on national gender policies is studied. In that sense, for a working definition I follow Ladrech (1994) and Wallace (2000) who define Europeanisation "as an incremental process re-orienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EU political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making" (Ladrech, quoted by Lenschow, 58:2006) .

 In their book *Contentious Europeans:Protest and Politics in an Emerging Polity* Tarrow and Imig discuss the representation of women's interests at the EU level in terms of the activities of the European Women's Lobby (Imig & Tarrow, 2001: 143-160). Sonia Mazey's research on women's interest groups and their representation at the EU level suggests that women groups are extremely essential in prompting policy change (Mazey, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2006). In parallel with Mazey's observations, Cichowski has portrayed Brussels as a formal platform in which women groups mushroom in order to promote women's interests actively at the EU level (Cichowski 2007). Similarly, Ellina points out active participation and lobbying of women in the EU policy arena: "In one of their most recent and strongest campaigns, women's groups actively lobbied the member state negotiators during the intergovernmental conference for the Amsterdam Treaty" (Ellina, 2003: 87).

 In the context of Europeanisation of domestic gender policies, Ostner and Lewis argue that national governments insist on pre-existing gender patterns rather than complying to the EU norms (Ostner & Lewis, in Liebert 33: 2003). Hoskyns suggests the European integration as an impulsive force to speed up the transformation of domestic social patterns including gender relations (Hoskyns, 1996: 19). According to Liebert, domestic gender equality policies have converged in a "moderate diversity" (Liebert, 2003: 280). So, neither approaching them according to the compliance level to the EU regulations nor focusing on structural and institutional changes could explain the impact of the Europeanisation process on national policies, alone. Rather, Liebert claims that the Europeanisation process itself is continuously gendering and is aware of the fact that the EU gender equality norms could vary from culture to culture and according to different framings of gender issues in different contexts (Liebert, 2003: 257). Nevertheless Liebert adopts large scale comparisons among member states for the analysis of the implementation of the EU gender equality norms and focuses on the equality between men and women, women's employment and institutionalization in domestic gender policies. Following the similar path, Johanna Kantola in her book *Gender and the European*

*Union (2010)* frames the issue of gender equality in terms of initiatives taken by member states such as paternity leave measures.

Since the literature on gender equality and Europeanisation is huge and studies are vast it is impossible to mention every piece of work here. However, it would not be wrong to assert that there is a general tendency in the relevant literature to handle the issue with a focus on women's NGOs, women's institutionalisation, employment and participation in member states through a eurocentric perspective. The number of studies on Turkey and its gender policy in relation to the EU candidacy and Europeanisation is very limited and mostly about violence on women and equal employment strategies. The proposed research hopes to contribute the gap through inserting the experiences of organised LGBT people about the gender equality policy of the EU in a candidate country, Turkey. For an extensive analysis, I plan to reap the benefits of these theoretical and empirical insights. However, my aim is to intervene in this debate through the investigation of multiple gendered inequalities that LGBT people face in different cultural settings, decision making and employment. Whether the EU's gender equality policy is a legal force or a further step in already existing national gender equality agendas for LGBT organizations in Turkey.

**Brief Background on Turkish LGBT Movement**

Under the oppression of patriarchal tradition LGBT movement could never be an idea of "mass movement" until 1980s in Turkey. After the cold war and the arise of identity politics a movement from small groups came up. Their gathering resulted in the publishing of KAOS GL magazine in 1994. Afterwards the movement grew very fast in itself comparing to the movements in other developing countries. However, strong patriarchal structure of the culture was the main obstacle to the movement to be visible in daily life discourses, public spheres and mass media. Therefore, most of the LGBT activists were fighting for the right to not to be ignored by the state and the society. This was not an easy task since Turkey's cultural infrastructure, the discourse of morality and religious ideology regard homosexuality as sin, immorality and disease. It is an imported idea or concept from the 'West'[6]. They were forced to hide their identity, have a heterosexual marriage and live according to the traditional patriarchic norms. In this environment the LGBT activists had to deal many different issues

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[6] The term 'western' corresponds to Western European Countries such as Germany, The Netherlands, France or Belgium which are considered as the most modern countries in the Turkish culture.

from struggling for their legal rights to facing social oppression. Their agenda was composed of informing people that homosexuality is not a disease, trying to enlarge the movement by this way and to reach as many people as possible (Ertetik, 2010).

Comparing to other developing countries, LGBT movement in Turkey followed a different path depending on many changing dynamics of Turkey's on development. After the fast modernization project and the nation-state building process LGBT movement was neither a discussion topic among people nor visible on mass media. Second wave feminism after 1980s, the rise of neo-liberal policies and increasing individualism paved the way for more discussion on LGBT movement particularly in leftist rhetorics. In order to resist the violation of basic human rights, patriarchy and dominant heteronormativity the LGBT organizations cooperated amongst each other and worked in solidarity with other organizations fighting for women's liberation, the progress of feminist movement and the protection of basic human rights.

Today, people are aware of LGBT movement through public campaigns and other media tools. Local and European prides are organised in Istanbul. However, despite the fast growing movement the LGBT organizations still have to fight against rising discrimination in employment, political decision making and daily life. Though the movement itself could include conservative people the reactions from conservative communities are still very harsh since homosexuality is perceived as a sin according to the Islamic thought. Despite the gender measures the AKP government has to take within the EU's gender equality policy, it focuses on the protection of morality and traditional heterosexual family structure in its political agenda. In that sense the AKP government's negative attitude towards LGBT people contradicts the regulations that should be adopted for a full membership to the EU. Therefore, huge mass anxiety appears when a LGBT person comes out, fights for rights and tries to obtain public support through mass media. Patriarchy, Islam, the issue of immorality, they all are political tools of the AKP government to discriminate the other. As a result of social and political pressure on the society from the government LGBT people are the "other" again. They prefer to stay behind the curtains, silent and make forced heterosexual marriages to be invisible in the traditional patriarchic society. Despite practicing unhappy and unsatisfactory lives it is the only way to protect themselves from facing violence, becoming victims of hate crimes and being murdered. The recent situation that LGBT people face is interesting considering the fact that the government is forced by the EU to take measures for protecting

LGBT people's rights. A LGBT organization LAMBDA, in one of the major cities of Turkey, is dissolved by the state two weeks ago depending on the idea that it was organizing campaigns destroying the morality of youth and the population living in this city.

It is interesting to observe the contradictory attitude of the AKP government towards LGBT people since it both tries to Europeanize its policy for a full membership to the EU and uses conservatism in local politics at the same time. From LGBT people's side, it is difficult to use the EU tools for putting pressure on the AKP government since their visibility is seen as a threat to the society and to the conservative AKP government (Ertetik, 2010). In that sense, the evolution of feminist theory in Turkey helps me to understand and analyse how women and LGBT people face discrimination and oppression in many different ways under the hegemony of patriarchal society. In the case of Turkish LGBT movement, to question patriarchy may lead me to see and to demonstrate how it works to compose people's perceptions towards sexual identities in a heteronormative way. In particular, the feminist theory is going to assist me in the analysis of different unequal power relations within the LGBT movement itself and its Europeanisation process under the pressure from the AKP government, the society and the EU.

## Brief Background on Turkish Women's Movement and Feminism

During the modern nation-state building process in 1930s the state feminism was a tool of the state for the promotion of liberated modern woman portrait in the public sphere. After then the development of feminist movement slowed down due to two coup d'etats in 1960 and in 1980. Therefore Turkish feminism could find a chance to flourish only after 1980s. Despite the prohibition of many political activity by the state after 1980 coup d'etat feminist movement was not conceived as a threat to the state. So feminists found a chance to organize small scale feminist activities such as public campaigns or art festivals. Leading feminists mostly with high education started to have positions as professionals in the government and academy. They began to organize meetings, marchs, protests and campaigns to raise the public awareness (Kandiyoti, 1991; Kardam, 2005). Istanbul and Ankara became two major cities hosting the most influential feminist organizations that are setting the country's feminist agenda. In the early years of feminist movement, leading feminists were launching campaigns to be recognized by the state and the society more and to force the state for taking more measures against domestic violence and eliminating discriminatory laws. However, the

patriarchal structure of the Turkish society and the state's conservative attitude were always the main obstacles in front of them. Even though they kept on putting pressure feminist groups received little attention, faced confrontation form the state and conservative communities and thus, made a slow progress until the 1990s. The latter years brought more feminist institutionalism. Small feminist groups, initiatives and ad hoc committees ended up as organizations recognized by the state. Their number increased over time not only in major cities but in many small cities as well. Between 1990 and 2007, with the support of the United Nations, Women's Studies programmes were introduced into the graduate schedule of many major universities. However, these programmes were mostly middle-class, educated women oriented. Women from the working class, poor women and Kurdish women could hardly find a way to raise their voices (Kardam, 2005).

  The candidacy of Turkey to the EU brought increased pressure from the EU for the improvement of women's rights and the reduction of women's unemployment rate. Particularly Copenhagen Summit linked Turkey's full membership to the fulfillment of some principles such as upholding of human and women's rights and more respect to minorities. Within the framework of gender equality policy of the EU, Turkish feminist organizations got the chance to contact with the EU and the European Commission through its delegation to Turkey. Under the umbrella of the European Women's Lobby they started to lobby at the EU level. Today, Turkish feminists exploit every opportunity both at the national and the EU level to force the government for taking more measures in the improvement of women's rights, employment and the prevention of domestic violence. However, they constantly have to keep on putting pressure to the government for more rights and regulations in the law since the state itself is a patriarchal institution and the government is conservative. Besides, conservative communities assume that there is no feminist movement history in Turkey and feminists are gathering to lobby at the state level just because they are struggling with the pressure from the EU (Kardam, 2005).

In order to analyse how feminists in Turkey are organized against patriarchal norms, traditions and laws I plan to employ the theory of Feminist Institutionalism (FI) since it acts as a bridge between feminist theory and political science. Feminist research recently took and intitutionalist turn analyzing the processes and structures shaping the patterns of political

stability and change in feminist institutions. Gender[7] is a crucial category to study the gendered processes of political and institutional change. In its core, FI perceives social and political institutions as gendered practices and argues that understanding institutions as gendered entities shows the ways in which institutions reflect unequal gendered power relations in themselves as well. I will use the theory of FI to be able to analyse and discuss whether Turkish feminist movement embraces unequal gendered power relations either in itself or during the periods that it cooperates with LGBT movement. Besides, if the agenda and power relations within prominent feminist organizations changed over the time as a result of the pressure from the EU or not. I expect to demonstrate that the phrase "unequal gendered power relations" is vague since I do not think that gender can only be understood within the limits of female or male body (Butler, 2004). Under the pressure of strong patriarchy and rising conservatism both LGBT and feminist institutions work hand in hand to fight against these and therefore, power relations might be more comlicated than a simple schema of inequality between men and women. By this way, I plan to make a fresh contribution to the on going FI debate through the case of Turkey.

**Description of the proposed research**

Despite the fact that studies on comparative Europeanisation are too many (Liebert, 2003; Mazey, 2006; Verloo, 2006; Mazur 2009) there is a gap in the existing literature dealing with the impact of Europeanisation on domestic gender policies in candidate countries and the participation of LGBT people in this process. The EU's gender equality policy itself concentrates on only the equality between female and male while the inequalities that LGBT people face, are dealt under the policy of protecting fundamental rights. According to my own observations, despite the promotion of gender equality policy, the European Commission's current reports and brochures contain limited information about the influence of Europeanisation on national gender equality policies (See the European Commission reports and brochures on gender equality policy:

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[7] 'Gender' is defined many times by many different academics from different academic fields such as Yuval-Davis (1997), Siim (2000), Walby (2005), Butler (2004). In its most general meaning what distinguishes 'gender' from 'biological sex' is its social contruction trough traditions, norms and regulations within the society (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Walby, 2005). However, I look upon both 'sex' and 'gender' as social constructions through different language, rituals, traditions, laws and regulations. In that sense, I follow the concept of 'performativity' by Butler (2004) which explains gender in terms of different body gestures and without the borders of traditional female/male dichotomy.

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/index_en.html).Besies,

Europeanisation itself is a dynamic, contentious and unresolved process in need of further research. Within this framework my main **research question** is:

How is the LGBT movement in Turkey related to the Europeanisation process?

**Sub-research questions**: What are the main aims of the EU's gender equality policy? What is the aim of the Turkish LGBT movement in its relation to the process of Europeanisation? Is the EU involving LGBT movement in Turkey to its gender equality policy? of How and when is the gender equality policy of the EU inserted in the national agenda of Turkey? How is the direct involvement of LGBT people in decision-making and employment in the labour market implemented in practice? Is the LGBT population encouraged to actively participate in policy-making and to be employed at the national level? If so, is the national government enforced by the EU for enhancing domestic compliance? What is the role of LGBT movement and LGBT organizations in the process of adaptation and the implementation of gender equality policy of the EU? Are they using the EU as a tool to empower already existing domestic structures or the other way around? Are they actively organized to perform the principles of the EU's gender policy and lobby in order to influence the government decisions in accordance with this policy?

Through the investigation of the answers to the questions above, the aims are to provide an original work inwhich the dynamics of Europeanisation and its impacts on the political agenda of Turkish LGBT organizations through a critical feminist perspective, creative theoretical discussion and an empirical research. It is original precisely because the aim is to construct a bridge between European oriented studies on gender equality and Turkey whose membership to the EU is a contentious issue and the case of Turkish LGBT organizations is a curious one within this respect. To provide a systematic, critical analysis of Europeanisation and gender equality policy of the EU. To make a fresh contribution to the ongoing scientific debate on the relationship between Europeanisation and gender. To present a useful resource for researchers and LGBT people's organizations.


**Method and Operationalization**

The main method I plan to employ is process tracing (Galligan, 2008; Meier, 2006) through interviews with the contacts from LGBT organizations. The latter step will be data and document analysis. The method process tracing identifies the causal process itself including

causal mechanisms and the causal chain. It enables the researcher to theoretically predict the latter step and thus test it through interviews and document analysis. Within the framework of the proposed research, the aim is to analyse the process of Europeanisation and its impact on the political agenda of LGBT organizations. The process itself and changes at the national level include causal chains and mechanisms. Therefore, concerning such a contentious and unresolved process affected by many different variables, the process tracing method seems the most appropriate method. Some of the contacts at the national level are already in place and I am establishing a network in order to be in contact with the spokespersons working at the EU level. To explore the degree to which causal paths occur and mechanisms are hold, relevant reports on the principles of the EU's gender equality policy and the level of compliance at the domestic level are going to be analysed. Within the documents listed below, I plan to search for the power relations among LGBT organizations, the national government and the European Commission:

- the reports of the European Commission, of European Institute for Gender Equality, and of the Fundamental Rights Agency about gender equality policy and the progress across member states and candidate countries,

- the reports of the EWL and the studies conducted by European Institute for Gender Equality,

- national government reports depicting the level of progress,

reports and studies on LGBT organizations active at the domestic level.

The structures of the interviews will be face to face interviews with the representators from LGBT organizations such as Kaos GL. I am interested in their own narratives, how and according to which reasons they are organized in relation to the EU's gender equality policy and the interaction among them, current domestic government and the European Commission. In that sense, preliminary questions are:

- What do you think about the gender equality policy of the EU?

- Do you think that Turkish LGBT organizations should be included in gender equality policy at the domestic level?

- What are your expectations from current government within the framework of the EU's gender policy?

- Do you think of this policy as a step to put pressure on the current government to achieve equal representation in the decision making and participation in employment in Turkey?

**Which theoretical perspective?**

**(This part is still under construction)**

  Given the nature of the proposed research, the main theoretical perspective is feminist theory with the cooperation of post-structuralist feminism and feminist institutionalism. While I plan to exploit post-structuralist feminism to criticaly analyse and discuss the 'gender' itself in the EU's gender equality principles and the Turkish context, I   expect that feminist institutionalism would help me to explore the institutionalized gendered power relations in the EU, Turkey and the Turkish LGBT movement. When it comes to traditional institutionalism (studying formal/informal political structures, institutions rules, norms and ideas) or historical institutionalism (looks at the ways in which causal processes are linked throughout history), their analysis are gender blind. In introducing gender equality into the field of Europeanisation, feminist institutionalism may help better explain institutions in a dynamic way rather than focusing simply on their structure or function. A feminist institutionalist framework enables the researcher to reveal how institutions are gendered and the role of gender relations in institutional change, continuity or redesign and thus questions the very assumptions of traditional institutionalist theories (Meier, 2006).

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