



# **Tracing Cultural Change in the Reproduction of Intolerance: “Secularism”, “Islamism” and others in Turkey’s Experience of Democratization**

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## **Abstract**

How do cultural resources such as values and beliefs, and their functions in ideology-making, change? In the democratization literature, the value-based approach to culture seeks cultural change based on values. However, the combination of this approach with value-surveys fails to consider several ways in which change may unfold between cultural periods. Instead, this study will delve into a history of conversational texts, which are endogenously grounded within culture, capable of demonstrating culture in action and reflecting what is collective about culture as it operates through dialectical encounters. I focus on change in three landscapes of culture in Turkey, which have witnessed some of the most persistent stories of the unequal relationship between the self and the other.

These landscapes may be identified as follows: i) “LGBT” and the entertainment sector, ii) “women” and clothing, iii) “Alevi” and funerals. In the first case-study, I examine the re-making of (in)tolerance on the borders of the entertainment sector, during a period in which the visible representations of LGBT identity were gradually integrated into the competing mass value-systems. Secondly, I will examine the unchaining of interlocutors’ clothing rights and freedoms from their first-order values, as these interlocutors have recognized new discursive possibilities and constraints. Finally, I will focus on the intolerance, commonly rationalized by means of the politics of recognition and assimilation, against some syncretic religious traditions developed within Alevilik.

Bringing together all these landscapes, my conclusion addresses the broader dispute over the role of values, tolerance and recognition in democracy. I will conclude that democracy may not require an agreement on foundational values; but an acknowledgement of the disagreements over values before negotiating the rest—e.g. rights and freedoms. Though tolerance has limits and risks, whereas recognition has certain merits, they have different functions at such times of multifaceted cultural contestations.



**Jury:** Olivier Roy (EUI/RSCAS) Supervisor, Hanspeter Kriesi (EUI), Metin Koca (candidate), Elise Massicard (CERI, Sciences Po), Ayhan Kaya (stanbul Bilgi University)

**Bio:** Metin Koca is a PhD Researcher in the Department of Social and Political Sciences at the European University Institute (EUI). His thesis project, entitled “Tracing Cultural Change in the Reproduction of Intolerance”, surrounds the politics of culture, religion and secularism in democratization processes. In particular, Koca examines how the voices that (re)produced “Secularism” and “Islamism” in Turkey have (re)made their authoritative claims in relation to the other, whereas the other either engaged with the same ideological repertoires, or went beyond them.

Before attending the EUI, Koca completed his undergraduate degree at Bilkent University (2012) and earned a Master’s degree from the London School of Economics and Political Science (2013), where he was awarded the Jean Monnet Scholarship in “Justice, Freedom and Security”. As a part of his PhD project, Koca continued his studies as a visiting scholar in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley (2016-2017).