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WOMEN AND RESISTANCE IN URBAN SPACE[1]

Gülçin ERDİ[*]

ABSTRACT

This article studies women's resistance and mechanisms of politicisation in marginalised urban areas by focusing on the case of women's mobilization in the Dikmen Valley neighbourhood. In this mobilisation, the neighbourhood has a decisive role in the emergence of resistance, the development of a collective identity and the politicisation of the inhabitants. Appropriation and preservation of the neighbourhood which is considered by women as the central space for their everyday life and social relations become the main issue of their struggle. After presenting the Dikmen Valley and the evolution of urbanisation in Ankara, the article, drawing of Lefebvre's right to the city and theories on everyday forms of resistance, analyses the emergence of the discontent and the role of the neighbourhood in the resistance and the politicisation of the inhabitants. The focus will be particularly on women as they appear during the mobilisation as a leading power which convinced many other dwellers to join the action and the resistance in the neighbourhood. The article argues that the mobilisation experience in the neighbourhood has empowered women to question the political system, traditional values and gender relations in everyday life.

Keywords: Woman, Turkey, Urban Resistance, Neighbourhood, Everyday Life.

INTRODUCTION

The housing and estate policies implemented in Turkey since the early 2000s have given rise to a rapid urbanization accompanied by the transformation of many informal neighbourhoods and forced displacement of an important number of inhabitants living in these areas. Most of projects are imposed by the top decision makers, inhabitants are not consulted on the redesign of their neighbourhood and their resistance is generally repressed and rarely taken into account. The global objective of these policies is to generate a spatial rent contributing to the development of neoliberal economic regime and to the transformation of metropolitan cities as global cities with zero security and urban problems, privileging their touristic, financial and commercial use. In this perspective, social policies in the city and the search for some spatial justice promoting social diversity and support for disadvantaged populations are gradually overshadowed. This process gives rise sometimes to grievances from inhabitants in order to keep or have a place in the city with their own aspirations, demands and desires. In some of these grievances, women especially in the informal settlements increasingly play a key role to defend the neighbourhood which they considered as a main life and socialization space.

While women are always a part of the construction of urban space, their presence in urban settlements has been made often invisible as women's place is deemed to be in private home environment (caring for the children and running the household) according to gender-based division of labour (Falú, 2014). Through neighbourhood movements, women begin, in Turkey, to find their voices in terms of having rights, and that includes the right to the city. The emphasize on women's right to the city has been discussed in different international arenas like UNESCO and in 2004, a World Charter for Women's Right to the City[2] has been prepared with the aim to put women's right to the city into effect. According to this Charter, in addition to the absence of women from decisions linked to the territorial and urban planning of our cities, there are some specific obstacles like security or sexual division of work in the home avoiding women to appropriate entirely the city and to be aware of their rights.

In this context, although women are steadily moving forward in the public arena, in the areas of labour relations, gender-division of urban space is still evident in Turkey. I, therefore, argue that urban resistances in neighbourhood constitutes an opportunity for women in Turkey to affirm their political and socio-cultural subjectivities in order to gain more active place in the society and their everyday life.

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[2] For a copy of charter, see www.barcelona2004.org/www.barcelona2004.org/ esp/banco_del_conocimiento/ docs/OT_4_EN.pdf consulted on 1/02/2018.

The objective of this article is to study women's resistance and mechanisms of politicisation by focusing on the case of women's mobilization in the Dikmen Valley neighbourhood. In this mobilisation, the neighbourhood has a decisive role in the emergence of resistance, the development of a collective identity and the politicisation of the inhabitants. Appropriation and preservation of the neighbourhood which is considered by women as the central space for their everyday life and social relations become the main issue of their struggle.

After presenting the Dikmen Valley and the evolution of urbanisation in Ankara, the article will analyse the emergence of the discontent and the role of the neighbourhood in the resistance and the politicisation of the inhabitants. The focus will be particularly on women as they appear during the mobilisation as a leading power which convinced many other dwellers to join the action and the resistance in the neighbourhood. In this article, I argue that the mobilisation experience in the neighbourhood has empowered women to question the political system, traditional values and gender relations in everyday life.

1. DIKMEN VALLEY IN ANKARA DURING URBANIZATION PROCESS

At the beginning of the foundation of Ankara as the capital of Turkey in 1930s, what is now called the district of Dikmen was a small village with gardens, vineyards, far from the new city designed in 1928 according to urbanisation plans conceived by a German planner, Herman Jansen. These plans were foreseeing to preserve the village of Dikmen and its surroundings, in order to maintain its agricultural activities, to ensure the air quality and to conserve green spaces (Şenyapılı, 2004: 63–73).

Because of the high and unexpected demographic pressure linked to rural migration, the Dikmen Valley became progressively one of the areas where *gecekondu*s[3] began to emerge in the 1970s. From its beginnings, the neighbourhood has no infrastructure or basic services such as roads, electricity or water. Moreover, the services for electricity and running water services are performed clandestinely. Due to the rapid increase in population and gecekondus, policymakers provided progressively basic public facilities in the neighbourhood. Some gecekondus residents managed to obtain certificates of ownership (*tapu tahsis senedi*) from the municipality during the 1980s. Different political parties ruling Ankara municipality successively permitted these ownerships for electoral and economic reasons as the population of these informal neighbourhoods increased and was seen as voter sources; with the

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[3] The gecekondu which means literally 'built overnight' is the name of informal, shantytown settlements in Turkey.

legalisation and recognition of these areas, the various successive governments hope to get votes. In addition, the State which was absent in providing housing to these rural migrants coming to contribute to the economic development of cities, wanted also to distribute a part of welfare to these populations in order to maintain them in political and economic game rules.

As for the socio-economic and cultural composition of the neighbourhood, there are mostly disadvantaged low-income classes. The inhabitants often have precarious jobs. Among the men, a small minority are workers or basic civil servants in the town hall of Cankaya or public institutions. Women are often unemployed, most of them have undeclared work as housekeepers. Despite the fact that the neighbourhood was founded by left-wing groups in 1970s, the neighbourhood has diversified over the years and many migrants with conservative views from the cities of Central Anatolia have moved in. They were located in groups according to the towns of origin and built their gecekondu near to their *hemşeri* (people with the same hometown). There are thus strong relations of physical solidarity and the valuing of the community of origin.

In the early 1990s, the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality and the Municipality of Çankaya (a district of Ankara where the neighbourhood is located – see Figure-1), both led by the People's Republican Party (CHP), decided to launch an urban renewal project and include the Dikmen Valley project in Ankara's master plans in 1989. A semi-public company Metropol İmar AŞ, was created in partnership with the Municipality of Çankaya which plans to realise the project in five stages, each corresponding to the construction of a specific number of housing units including social housing.

Figure-1: Location of Dikmen. Courtesy of Florence Troin, CITERES, 2016.
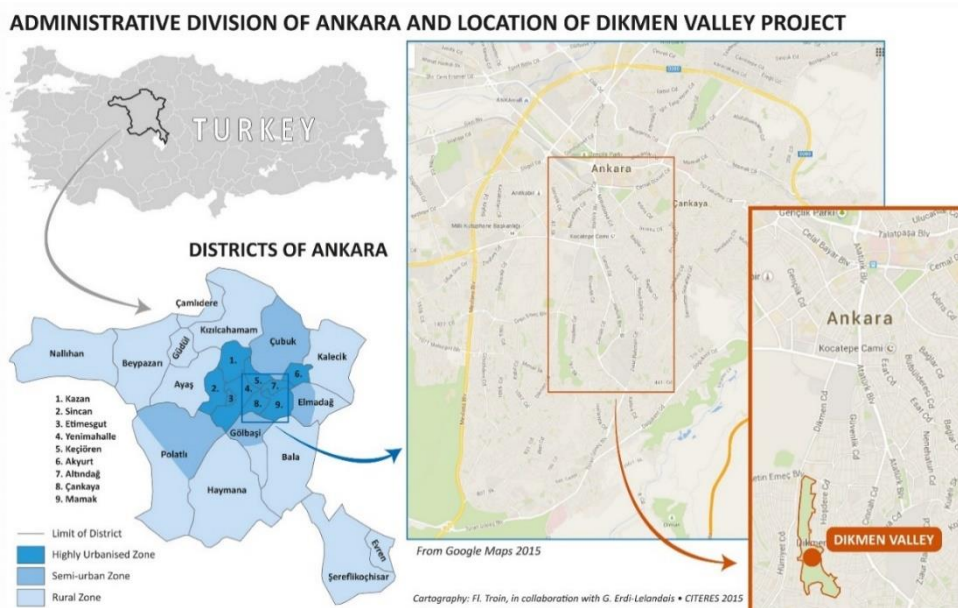
However, after Melih Gökçek's arrival as the head of the Metropolitan Municipality in 1994, most of the characteristics of the project have changed progressively. Now, according to the current guidelines, the objective is more the maximisation of land profit than the creation of social housing projects. In 2006, the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality declared the launch of the fourth and fifth stages of the project, restricting the conditions of access to the property for gecekondu residents. These require, above all, a rapid displacement, a high loan and a relocation proposed mainly in a peripheral area (Mamak Kusunlar) devoid of real infrastructure. In July 2006, the mayor of Ankara announced on several local television channels the imminent implementation of these stages of the project, adding that the residents of Dikmen Valley had enjoyed this place 'for free' for years and that they should now sign an agreement with the municipality within two weeks, otherwise their homes would be completely destroyed without any compensation and alternative rights of relocation. He also described the residents as çapulcu (looters) and warned that the municipality would not tolerate residents who stubbornly refused to leave the neighbourhood. These threats and insults had a mobilising effect for the inhabitants of the valley as they had a real feeling of exclusion and stigmatisation. This sentiment was even more intense for the Valley's women. For them, it was entirely unfair to be considered as squatters or thieves when they had lived there for more than 20 years and endured all kind of difficulties to build a shelter:

> "I have lived here for 22 years. When we migrated from Malatya [eastern Anatolia], I was twenty-two years old. I'd known nothing about Ankara and Turkish. My language was Kurdish. Some relatives constructed a gecekondu here, then we decided to do the same thing. We have had a lot of debt. My husband had just come back from military service so he was unemployed. I had my two children and it was impossible to pay off our debts… My children were hungry, I could even not buy bread. We passed a night in front of the stove without eating. We had nothing. We stayed here because of poverty. I had carried sandbags for the house with my baby son on my back. To pay the costs of the gecekondu, I was a housekeeper, concierge…I cleaned up the carpets and duvets of rich people… Now, it is normal that I don't want to leave my house. We, women, were expected to be subordinate, silent, and obedient even against injustice…Now it is over, we want our right to shelter after all these painful years." (Nazlı).

The space of gecekondu appears actually as a vital space socially and collectively constructed, playing sometimes the role of a therapy place with other women. Having no choice to live with rules imposed by the society, women consider the space of gecekondu as an intimate space where they could confide in other women, socialise, help each other. In that way, it becomes a "sacred place" to preserve unconditionally. In addition, by emphasizing all psychological

and material difficulties they faced and how they knew to manage them despite of all the pain, women of Dikmen want to show how they deserve a respectful place and try to show also their empowerment (Göral, 2011: 78). Their struggle in the neighbourhood empower their position with the argument that gecekondu women have undergo double punishment and domination and therefore have all legitimate reasons to resist (ibid: 72).

2. MOBILIZING FOR THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The resistance of the residents refusing the agreement imposed by the municipality started in Dikmen in the autumn of 2006. Although ethnic, religious and political differences had divided and dispersed the residents to a certain extent and initially complicated the organisation of the mobilisation, some of them – including some original founders of the neighbourhood in the past – managed to be heard and to propose meetings. At these meetings, some of the inhabitants decided to elect 'street representatives' and to constitute a neighbourhood assembly composed of these representatives. This assembly then decided to find a permanent place to lead the mobilisation and negotiation process. In the meantime, the municipality opened an office on the upper frontier of the Valley to manage the project's implementation, demolition of gecekondus and administrative relations with residents. In return, the residents called this office the 'Demolition office' and decided to create in opposition an 'Office for Housing Rights' with the support of the people participating in the mobilisation.

According to Sultan, a woman from the neighbourhood, the office has become the institutional and symbolic centre of the struggle, common ground but also the physical reflection of the collective will of the inhabitants of the valley; it goes beyond the meaning of an association or cooperative:

> *"The office is a roof that brings the neighbourhood together and unites us. People working in the office are very important to us. They have always remained there, sometimes without food, without water. Even if all the residents do not come often, we know that the office is always open and continues the struggle. Women can go there also. They manage to keep the office open. It never closes for holidays, summer or winter." (Sultan)*

Photo: Office for Housing Rights

As part of the opposition to the project, the actions and claims were limited initially to residents' rights to new housing, even in another part of the city and without taking on major debts. Their primary purpose was to secure the welfare of the inhabitants. Among the main actions taken, there were sit-ins in front of the national parliament, media statements in front of the municipality of Ankara, collective rallies, meetings in the park (Güvenpark) of the central square of Ankara (Kızılay), organisation of an annual festival and numerous lawsuits against the metropolitan municipality assisted by a lawyer hired within Halkevleri[4]. In all these actions, the presence of women had been considerable.

Halkevleri and its activists living in the neighbourhood were able to create informal networks of solidarity and political learning, especially for women. Many women explained how they were informed about different social issues during the nights they passed in the gecekondu of Halkevleri's activists. Sultan, one of the most active women in the neighbourhood, explained clearly the role of Halkevleri in her politicisation:

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[4] Halkevleri restarted its activities in 1987 and opted for an organisation from below in some neighbourhoods known for their political engagement in the past, refusing any avant-garde approach. Their principle is to act with people and not for people. This organisation was set up by the founding elites of the republic in 1932 with the aim of familiarising the people with the principles of the Republic, to provide education and culture programmes. It was closed by the government of the Democrat Party in the 1950s and all its assets were transferred to the State Treasury. After the overthrow of the party and the establishment of a new constitution following a military coup in 1960, the organisation was re-established in 1963 under the status of association, independent of the state, very different from its origins and mostly closed to socialist ideology. The second coup in 1980 once again banned the organisation marked as radical left, close to socialist movements of the 1970s.

> *"They were all the time with us, in the neighbourhood. They have never tried to guide us but we had long nights of discussion. Some nights, we were organising poetry lectures. They were bringing the poems of Cemal Süreya. We had never heard about that but there were poems about making love, about a woman's body…it was erotic but also sensual. We loved these nights. At the same time, they also helped our children with their homework. When there was an act of resistance, they were also with us in the barricades. So, we considered them as full members of our neighbourhood and it was the case. Thanks to them, I also learned about other struggles, about women's conditions." (Sultan)*

According to one of the members of Halkevleri, they were successful in the progressive politicisation and awakening of the consciousness of residents:

> *"Although initially there were not many people, we had set up regular informal meetings in the evenings. People had come, spoken about things that did not please them. We thought that if we should take risks, we should take them with people of the neighbourhood. We must do what they wanted to do. For example, at the beginning, they wanted to go to AKP believing people they know there could help. They wanted to go to the prefecture, police, and the mayor. We had never given our own opinion on these institutions. By dint of seeing that all the doors were shut in their face, they understood that the only force they had was their own power and ability. Eventually, they said, 'If we resist in the neighbourhood, we can save our home and protect our future'." (Özgür)*

In this case, the issue is less the ability of these activists to impose a definitive view than their ability to mobilize. They constantly communicate with the residents to produce arguments, to formulate a common representation of the situation. They participate and contribute, therefore, to create an 'us', and the emergence of a sense of common destiny.

To denounce the marginalisation of the neighbourhood and the contempt of public actors, residents also invented original forms of action designed to restore the image of their neighbourhood. According to Michel Agier, social and spatial closures, produced by stigma, can lead to forms of integration that city dwellers implement in order to resist segregation in the city (1999). He is thus opposed to the prevailing analysis according to which margins in the city are considered as places of social anomie and highlights the resources of the people, their social connections and their inventiveness. The resistance organised in Dikmen Valley constitutes one of the examples of this inventiveness and the capacity of empowerment emanating from the so-called margins of the city.

Photo: Gecekondus in Dikmen Valley before the project in 2015

The stigmatising discourse of public actors and particularly the mayor, describing the residents of the valley as 'terrorists' or 'looters' , increased the collective mobilisation and indignation by politicising the rest of the inhabitants. This indignation can be seen as an emotional source of participation and a kind of 'moral shock' managing to touch the hearts and minds and then to constitute a good reason to protest (Jasper, 1997).

According to Jasper, this moral shock 'results from an unexpected event or an unexpected change, more or less sudden, of people's environment; [it] involves a very strong reaction [...] [it] leads one who is faced to measure and to judge how the current world order seems to deviate from the values to which he/she adheres' (cited in Traïni, 2010: 343) and thus creates an anger, 'a sentiment of necessity to give an immediate reaction, which leads to a commitment to action, and that, even in the absence of favourable factors generally emphasised by the theories of collective action' (ibid), including the inability of the poor to take action. This is exactly what happens in women's mobilisation and politicisation. Generally considered as subaltern, without resource and power, the gecekondu women in the Valley lead a mobilisation resulting on a successful resistance against the municipality.

3. BECOMING ACTORS OF THE CITY AS LIVED AND LEARNED SPACE

The originality of resistance in the Dikmen Valley is the active participation of women in the mobilisation. The possibility of losing their neighbourhood has been, above all, felt by the Valley's women. The female population mostly remain in the neighbourhood; their life is directly related to

their home, family and children. Most of them come from rural areas of Anatolia where solidarity with neighbours was strong and they reproduce the same kind of solidarity within the neighbourhood with other female neighbours in their street and nearby. Their socio-economic profile shows that, in general, these women have a low level of education. There is no woman with a university degree and only few of them have a high-school diploma. In general, they do not work or have a regular job. Some of them work as housekeepers, unofficially and in precarious conditions. Most of them married very young, between 18 and 23 years of age, and had at least two children very quickly. Some of them came to live in a metropolitan city (Ankara) after their marriage. Therefore, most of their lives have been spent in the neighbourhood.

Their social status brings clearly to light the subordinate positions and conditions in which women in cities find themselves. Women's place is deemed to be in the private home environment, out of the public eye and they are seen as responsible only and exclusively with regard to domestic and reproductive tasks. Therefore, women have to develop different tactics to find a place and interlocutors in order to make this voice heard.

One of the women, Sultan, stresses the importance of neighbourhood: "*A house outside of my neighbourhood means nothing to me. The neighbourhood is as important as my house. We are all poor, oppressed. The neighbourhood is the place that unites us all*" (Sultan). Gülhan, another woman in the neighbourhood, adds that "*The neighbourhood is a large and strong family, where the misfortunes become honey*" (Özer, 2012: 67). Their activism is a conscious and collective way of expressing and acting in their interests as women, as wives and as members of the neighbourhood (Rodriguez, 1994).

We can even say that it is thanks to the women that the neighbourhood has remained for so many years because they maintain, in respect of this place, a particular narrative, which differs from that of the men. The majority of men are absent in the day and return home in the evening. Most of them do more than one job during the day and work as unqualified workers in different sectors. The long working hours of men mean they are less aware of everyday problems and difficulties facing the women, and they do not have the time to be mobilised when the need arises. This situation paves the way to the active participation of women in mobilisation. Men also have work and friendship networks outside the area while most women stay in the neighbourhood and construct and develop their social links within it. It is the place where social and economic needs are filled by solidarity, where families and friends come together and where there is a feeling of being on their own territory. Thus, it provides the means to exist in the city and to be rooted within it:

"Before our struggle, I have not known many people in the neighbourhood. The struggle has brought us together. Without making religious, linguistic or ethnic distinctions, we became like sisters in sharing our troubles, happiness and hopes. We, women, have learned that life is not only in our homes but also in the barricades. While we have hardly ever gone out and usually spent our days within four walls of our houses, we are now everywhere with our children. We have learned to demand our rights and we also teach it to our children so that they do not live the same. We have learned to claim the life we desire, not that imposed on us. The Valley became a major training school for women." (Sultan)

As mentioned before, most women do not have a regular job and some of them do domestic work in wealthy neighbourhoods surrounding the Valley. They therefore rarely develop other social relations outside their neighbourhood beside relationships they may have with the women for whom they work. One could even say that the neighbourhood constitutes a kind of natural boundary between women and different representations and spaces of the metropolitan city. However, this boundary is quite relative. Women of the Valley, even they seemed to be confined in spaces of duty, of perpetual and endlessly repeated tasks that gain little recognition, are sometimes able to develop strategies to challenge this separation (Ilcan, 1998). The visible everyday boundaries are sometimes maintained but they are also crossed, resisted and reconfigured. In fact, when they go to high-income neighbourhoods as housekeepers of other women, they participate in the city, use public transport, and observe people and especially the way of life of the women for whom they work. They see the economic and social differences and sometimes develop a political awareness (Wedel, 2001). Looking at the construction of the city through the lens of the diversity of women's lives acknowledges that the category 'woman' cannot be stripped of the other forms of oppression that impinge upon women in their daily lives. Thus we get a richer sense of how women negotiate their way in the city, and in particular, the ways in which the intersection of gender, race and class affects women and either limits or encourages actions (Miranne and Young 2000: 2).

The attachment to the neighbourhood results in a feeling of well-being; conversely, having to leave it results in a sense of loss. Analysis of women's behaviour and words highlights the political significance of practices and use of the space and confirms that the space plays a key role in mobilisation. It not only motivates and structures women's resistance but also transforms gender relations within the neighbourhood.

In short, the defence of the neighbourhood as a source of women's politicisation transforms them by enhancing their confidence, ensuring

individual empowerment and providing collective recognition despite all the obstacles they meet. A woman explained, for example, how her husband tried, at the beginning, to prevent her from participating in the mobilisation, and how then, facing her determination, he finally allowed her out to attend the collective struggle:

> *"People have asked me why I was worrying myself with all of that [resistance, na] but I continued because I was convinced that our struggle was justified. I could not go to certain mobilisations at the beginning. My husband did not want me to. We did not agree at all. We have quarrelled all the time. For me, it was unfair. It was not right for me to stay at home when people were fighting against the project. After a while, I was able to convince my husband and because of my stubbornness, he accepted the situation. He had no choice, he saw how determined I was." (Nur, from focus group interview).*

By providing a social and political visibility to women who were often invisible and ignored in the city, outside their neighbourhood, this mobilisation has also affected the spatial organisation and power relations between men and women within the district. By participating in actions, conferences, panels and meetings, women of the Valley discover new urban spaces to which they have never had access before; they rediscover themselves and measure their real capacity to act. These new public spaces are thus identified by –and for– women beyond the borders of the neighbourhood. Going downtown to attend a panel where they could listen to psychologists, lawyers, journalists and urban planners allows them to access previously unknown knowledge and to acquire new skills which help their emancipation as well as their personal and collective development.

In this sense, according to Jelin, it is important to ask "whether the conditions under which women leave their traditional role rooted in daily life to enter the public domain constitute a significant departure with regard to social changes in women's subordination, helping to form gender identities that put in doubt the current system of domination" (Jelin, 1990: 188). With this mobilisation and their will to be part of it, women progressively develop their ability to speak in an environment where silence is one of the most evident forms of women's oppression as most of the families in the Valley are in general patriarchal and traditional.

Furthermore, in the mobilisation process, the practical and daily needs of women are transformed into strategic needs such as defence of their home. This process ensures their survival strategies and resistance in a political sense. The fact that they perceive their homes and the neighbourhood as a common public space composed of informal networks of communication and solidarity leads to

the conquest of the city and allows them to reclaim a place in public spaces. The intimate space (neighbourhood-home) becomes public space and opens up other spaces. Sultan explains this process of widespread politicisation:

> "If there are no women in a mobilisation, it is condemned to failure. We started initially with the right to housing, but we understood that we cannot politicise only the local struggle of our neighbourhood, as residents can easily forget it after having secured their house [...]. For me, resistance is a lifelong process. After the resistance in the neighbourhood, women of the Valley started to protest everywhere on different subjects. We went to Labour Day, to rallies for the right to education and the right to public services. For us, human rights are indivisible." (Sultan, from the women's group interview)

Thus, their claim of a right to housing extends to other rights. They have begun to participate in other mobilisations on different societal issues. They supported, for example, the strike of Tekel workers in 2009 and Gezi Park resistance in 2013.

However, this active involvement of women does not take place without criticism. According to their words, some of them were strongly criticised by their families:

> "In my family, all relatives living in the neighbourhood support AKP. They always told me that I'm fighting for nothing, that it is not good to oppose the state who could easily punish us. They accused me of joining the protesters, to become like them. They ask 'What does the AKP not do well? They build roads, hospitals; they give us social aid'. They accuse us of being ungrateful. They told me: 'You also became like these leftists, you vote like them, like these Alevis'." (Fatma)

In spite of this kind of family or social barrier, women continued their struggle accompanied by the construction of a global political consciousness. Another important example was the appointment of a woman to the municipal elections in March 2014. Candidate to the position of mukhtar in the borough to which the inhabitants of the Valley are attached, she led a local campaign and obtained 487 votes out of 1200.

In the Dikmen Valley's resistance, women who draw up and present their agendas, develop and organise their capabilities to pressure authorities succeeded to have a voice in decision making but also to renegotiate their role in their family as women. This brings with it a symbolic and cultural change in their life. More specifically, the participation to the mobilisation provide some social compensations according to the legal status of women (Le Texier, 2006: 122); Some of them become "contact person" inside the neighbourhood like Sultan

who manage women's coordination and gain therefore new skills, social and collective recognition. Some of them are politically empowered and take place in political parties. These women have had then the capacity to initiate a mobilisation dynamic to respond to some punctual needs like asking a bus stop or stopping up dirty canalisation waters in the street to avoid children to play with.

4. CONCLUSION

Thus, this experience seems to prove that gender asymmetries, and the division of labour and power differentials, must not only be considered as constraints guiding women's activism, as it can also function as a catalyst for taking action (Neuhouser, 1995). The subaltern situation of women in the neighbourhood enabled them to meet, to discuss in common their collective problems and to decide to be mobilised.

In the example of the Dikmen Valley women have demonstrated the existence of a potential to protest and the possibility of collective action in a context of spatial instability (Le Texier, 2006: 131).

Women's resistance in Dikmen Valley presents a number of characteristics. First of all it reflects a variety in generations. Women of all ages participated in the resistance; some of them have become adults during ten years of resistance and been forged by a protest identity. Their resistance, limited at the beginning to the protection of their home and neighbourhood, have expanded to embrace global issues concerning the whole Turkish society and especially equality and gender relations. They have sometimes confronted sexism and male power within the neighbourhood and changed the stereotype of passive and resigned women into one of active subjects (Rodriguez, 1994).

As a result, among these women, some of them will never be the same again. Personal growth, self-confidence, changes in relationships in the family, neighbourhood and community contribute to reshaping their gender identity (ibid: 40).

Finally, the resistance of the Valley's women can be interpreted as a form of struggle for recognition insofar as they assert their right to exist in the city, to appropriate it and invest it with their own way of life and way of being. This determination to gain recognition is also related to all the difficulties they experienced while they were fighting for their home and neighbourhood. It is the women rather than the men who suffered much more than lack of water, electricity and roads and the distance of schools for their children. They dealt with these problems for years and now want this struggle to be recognised along with an improved way of life as a woman.

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