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**A SENSE FOR NO FUTURE: YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCE OF CRISIS IN
THE “NEW” TURKEY**

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1. Introduction

The subject of this finishing dissertation was first designated as a comparison between the youth living in Turkey and Greece as to their future expectations. In the first months of 2021 when I chose this subject, Turkey and Greece seemed like two societies that were comparably crisis-ridden. Observing the public discourses in Turkey where I come from, and in Greece where I live, I felt that the crises that the respective countries had gone through had touched the societies in different ways. It was as different issues were at stake in the way people, and especially young people, complained about their countries and the points of hope or lack of hope that they referred to were different. At this time I held the crisis in Turkey to be a past situation rather than an immediate one, having culminated in the political and economic volatilities of the late 2010's. The course of my research and the developments that took place later in the year would show me that this was not the case.

As months passed by and I slowly proceeded with my research, carrying out interviews in Turkey and Greece, it became evident that the situations in the two countries did not allow a meaningful comparison. The data that I collected through the interviews that I made with people living in Turkey were showing some patterns that did not have equivalents in the data I was collecting through the interviews that I made in Greece. The interviews in Turkey carried a sense of urgency and they repeated certain threads. The way in which people in Turkey were talking about their lives and their future hinted that they were reacting to an emergent situation. For people in Greece, on the other hand, the emergency was something that they remembered and wanted to be prepared against, but that did not preoccupy them with the same intensity.

This hint was confirmed by the developments later in the year, when starting from late November 2021 the Turkish lira entered what seemed like a process of free fall, quickly resulting in an inflation surge. Day by day we followed the changes in the value of the lira and the prices of basic consumption goods, shocked every new day by the numbers that we saw. It was difficult even to identify what was evidently a serious economic crisis, because there was no official acknowledgment of the situation and the mainstream media in Turkey

played it down. In this situation, I realized that the research that I was carrying out could serve a purpose different from what I had projected in the beginning. It could serve to draw a picture of how people experienced and made sense of the probably unprecedented crisis that Turkey was going through.

The extent of the crisis in Turkey is a subject of debate. Historian Reinhart Koselleck argues that “the semantic struggle for the definition of political or social position” is typical of all times of crisis. (Koselleck, 2004, p. 80) It should not be surprising therefore that the naming of the current economic crisis becomes a political issue by itself. The Justice and Government Party (AKP for Turkish *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) rose to power in 2002 after the banking crisis of 2000-1 had wiped out the political parties of the previous period. Inclusion of all population groups in the public sphere and economic development for the whole country were their professed objectives, as it was argued widely in this period that the Kemalist elitism of the Turkish state tradition kept segments of the society excluded and undeveloped. The rise to power of a political party that was excluded could help build a more inclusive and democratic society. The AKP had become a single-party government in the first elections that they won, receiving just about one-third of all votes, due to the draconian electoral threshold that had been introduced by the military regime after the 1980 coup d'état. (Sevinç, 2014, p. 159) AKP's rise to power has incorporated previously excluded masses of religious citizens into the regime through bonds of patronage and paternalism. (Tugal, 2009, p. 165) The policies that were implemented especially in the first decade of the AKP rule, in the 2000's, have served to restructure the wealth regime in Turkey. (Yılmaz, 2018, p. 113) The economic success and relative stability of the AKP era that trickled down to the greater society through bonds of clientelism, was one of the major factors through which this rule was legitimized. (ibid., p. 134) The massive pauperization that the current economic crisis brings about is therefore particularly problematic for the government and its ways of legitimizing its rule. Considering the fact that the economic success of this government had been instrumental for the many structural changes that it imposed on the country, such as the transition of Turkey from a parliamentarian into a presidential system, the lack of such success is likely to create serious outcomes in how this government is perceived.

Despite the undeniable downward turn in the material living standards in Turkey (which are accompanied by a fall in non-material living standards, but these latter can more easily be denied) the government still has support from a large part of the population. Opinion polls from January 2022 indicate that support for the government is not at its lowest, and that there is a small increase in their popular support compared to December 2021.¹ The electoral success of the AKP government and especially of Erdoğan has been some kind of mystery for non-AKP voters since at least the beginning of this government, and often the AKP voters have been accused of selling their votes in exchange for “pasta and coal”, i.e. for small material benefits. That support for this government has not (yet) fallen below a certain threshold during the current economic crisis is a sobering point that demonstrates the aspects of the AKP rule in Turkey that cannot adequately be addressed. However, it is also limiting to suppose that the constituency of the AKP make up the “real” Turkey, while opinion polls find out that a majority of the population declares that they would never vote for Erdoğan.²

The New Turkey which the AKP government claims to have founded, does not allow for easy generalizations. The first step towards gaining a comprehension of the situation is to approach the Turkish society as it is - a ground of encounter and competition between different world-views and attachments. This work hopes to contribute to an understanding in this direction, by providing a thematic analysis of young people’s narratives of their future expectations in the Turkey of 2021. How is the crisis experienced and perceived by the youth? How do young individuals narrate and give meaning to this experience? How are their narratives affected by political allegiances, depending on where they stand and who they have to reply to? To answer these questions, the research has collected data, declarations from young people’s discourses, about how they see their future and what their expectations, hopes and fears are. This data has been subjected to a thematic analysis that demonstrates around which themes these discourses rotate and how these themes relate to each other, to

¹ According to the opinion poll carried out by Metropoll, slightly more people in January 2022 have declared that they would vote for the AKP if elections were held this weekend, than those who have declared the same in December 2021.

<https://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/256951-millet-ittifaki-41-7-cumhur-ittifaki-39-9-halklarin-demokratik-pa-rtisi-11-6>

² A poll from December 2021 has found out that close to 60% of the voters in Turkey say that they would never vote for Erdogan in the coming elections.

<https://t24.com.tr/haber/yoneylem-arastirma-dan-secim-anketi-akp-ilk-kez-birinci-parti-konumunu-yitirdi-millet-ittifaki-nin-oy-orani-cumhur-ittifaki-nin-7-7-puan-onunde.999416>

give a comprehensive picture of how and on what terms the youth perceive their future, that is by definition a product of their present.

The dissertation has been organized into six chapters. The first chapter is an introduction of the work and an explanation as to the position of the researcher. The second chapter contains a review of the existing literature in Turkey and worldwide about the future expectations of young people. The third chapter explains the research question and the context of the research, laying down the theoretical framework of the research. The fourth chapter is the presentation of the method and the data that have been used in this dissertation. The fifth chapter where the results of this work are presented and analyzed, is the most comprehensive chapter of this work. It is divided into three sections. In the first two sections of the fifth chapter, the results obtained from the analysis of two data sets are presented separately. The third and last section of this chapter is a discussion of these findings together. The sixth and last chapter is the conclusion of this work, where the limitations of this work and its implications for further research are discussed. An extensive bibliography of all resources used in this work has been given at the end of this text.

2. Literature Review

This chapter discusses the previous works of research on the future expectations of youth in Turkey, as well as the works of research on the future expectations of young people that have been carried out in other countries, or in a cross-country context. The terms used in the literature may vary, where some works discuss future expectations while others prefer the terms life expectations, or future orientation. While these terms can each take on a different meaning, in the literature, they are often used interchangeably. The subject's attitude towards the future is referred to with these various terms and often, a discussion of values accompany the discussion of future expectations. Most of the studies that have been carried out in Turkey on young people's future expectations are quantitative. They seek to find out the extent of young people's future expectations, the values that they care about, the objects towards which their future-related emotions show investment, and the correlations of these expectations with other variables.

Studies on youth in Turkey seem to have made a peak in the late 1990's. Large scale surveys on youth values and expectations were carried out sporadically and often, even if not regularly, during the last decades. An important work in youth studies in Turkey is the research sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Turkey and carried out by the Center for Social Research of the Graduate Union of Alumni of the Faculty of Political Sciences and Public Administration of Ankara University, in 1998. (Center for Social Research, 1999) This extensive research names the youth as "the Silent Mass" in its very title, implying that young people do not express themselves and their voice is unheard in the public dialogue. This work is based on a survey that is carried out on a sample of 2200 individuals from different backgrounds and living in different parts of Turkey, where they are asked about their socioeconomic status, preferences, expectations, values and opinions. A chapter is dedicated to their future expectations and political affiliations. Findings show that most of the youth in the Turkey of 1998 are satisfied with their lives, this satisfaction being higher in higher socioeconomic status and lower in lower socioeconomic status. (ibid., p. 108) Unemployed youth and uneducated working youth have lower levels of satisfaction, as well as "the youth who build their identities on left-political, ethnic-sectarian and

new-modern references' '. The same pattern along identities and socioeconomic status can be seen also when it comes to future expectations, except for the observation that youth belonging to the lowest socioeconomic stratum are more optimistic about their future than they are about their present. (ibid., p. 109) It is noted that there is a general optimism about the future, that they believe they are luckier than the generation of their parents and their children will be luckier than them. (ibid., p. 107) This research presents some interesting correlations - such as the finding that the youth that is pessimistic about the social and economic future of the country finds it more likely that Turkey will be Islamized in the coming period. (ibid., p. 111) The study is also important in that it gives a glimpse of the society of 1998 and its lines of division, which in the light of retrospective knowledge takes on a different significance. Among all names of contemporary public figures listed for the question "Which of these names would you like to see governing Turkey?" Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then mayor of Istanbul, comes first. He is mentioned primarily by right-wing individuals with traditional values, but also by youth that do not have political affiliations, which the researchers attribute to his personal charisma. (ibid., p. 118)

Another early research seeks to find out what are the values of university youth and how these have changed between the 1970's and the 1990's. (İmamoğlu & Karakitapoğlu, 1999) This research moves from the observation that in these decades there has been a change in the socioeconomic structure of Turkey as well as in other countries, and that this situation has had an effect on young people's objectives and values. The research concludes that compared to the previous generation, young people are less concerned with social altruistic values, with youth declaring that "peace in the world" or "equality" are less important for them. (ibid., p. 8) The authors of this paper suggest that from the 1970's until the 1990's there has been a change in people's values from a social towards an individualistic perspective - i.e. that they care less about social norms and more about their individual freedom and self-realization, which the authors say has to do with the general trend of liberalism in the world. (ibid. p. 11) Youth in the late 1990's in Turkey want freedom and independence more than other values (ibid., p. 13). Although important, this research is limited in that it is only conducted among university youth living in Ankara, one of the largest metropolitan centers of Turkey, and is therefore not representative of the whole society. However, the research bears significance in

that it reflects how socioeconomic change affects psychosocial values and expectations. Another study from 1998 seeks to compare the future expectations of working-class youth and university students aged between 16-24 living in Istanbul by using the “life orientation test”. (Güleri, 1998, p. 58) This work finds that in 1994 when the data was collected, working youth were more pessimistic about their future, while studying youth seemed to be more optimistic. The research also found out that the concerns of the youth differed, with the working class youth being more concerned about winding a good spouse and making a good marriage, and the university youth being more concerned about independence, finding a good job, talent and knowledge. (Güleri, 1998, p. 63)

There has been a surge in the number of academic works on subjects related to youth in Turkey from the early 2000’s onwards. This surge can partially be attributed to the growing volume of academic production.³ While it would be impossible to include the large volume of academic works on the expectations, values or life orientation of the youth in Turkey that has been published in the last two decades, some of the research will be referred to in this section in order to provide an encompassing outlook of the field of research.

A 2005 research carried out with more than a thousand high school and uni students in Turkey through questionnaires has found out that youth’s concerns are for the most part related with profession, marriage, economic well-being and social status. (Yavuzer et al., 2005) For university students, the fifth most important expectation is found to be “living in a more democratic society”. For high school students, physical well-being seems to come before social status. (Yavuzer et al., 2005, p. 99) Overall in this research, the researchers have found that university students care more about social matters than high school students, although for each group in 2005, profession, marriage and economic well-being are the preceding values. (Yavuzer et al., 2005, p. 100) In this work, researchers refer to the fact that social concerns overall are being lost for the generation. (Yavuzer et al., 2005, p. 101) For the purposes of our research, it needs to be noted that in this survey by Yavuzer et al. only 15.8%

³ While there were only 76 universities in Turkey in 2002 when the AKP came to power, in the next two decades 132 new universities were founded.
<https://www.dogrulukpayi.com/iddia-kontrolu/yilmaz-tunc/recep-tayyip-erdogan-dan-once-bugunku-universitelerin-4-te-3-u-yoktu-hali-hazirda-yurtlarin-4-te-3-u-yoktu>

of the university youth and %11.8 of the high school youth declare that they want to live in another country. (Yavuzer et al., 2005, pp. 97-99)

In 2005, another research was carried out on how the levels of hope of high school students vary in correlation with their perceived support from family. (Kemer & Atik, 2005) The results of this study have shown that the perceived support from family as well as the area where they live have an impact on the hope levels of students. A paper in 2011 surveyed students' future expectations and reached the result that the level of optimism of university students about their future varies depending on factors such as the number of their siblings or the education level of their parents. (Tuncer, 2011) Another work seeks to find out whether young people's future expectations vary depending on the kind of school where they study, concluding that indeed students training to become sports teachers have higher expectations than those studying in the high school of fine arts. (Uluçay et al., 2014) Another research on the anxiety and hope levels of students studying in vocational tourism schools concludes that social expectations are more emphasized by the students who have low income. (Zengin & Şengel, 2020, p. 444)

These results need to be contrasted with the results of another survey conducted in 2020 by a research company (MAK) in collaboration with Yeditepe University where surveys to 8000 individuals between 18-29 living in all of the regions of Turkey were carried out. (Yeditepe University & MAK Danışmanlık, 2020) For ethical concerns (the fact that consent is more complicated for underage groups), this research leaves out youth below the age of 18. It finds out that %64 of the youth say “definitely yes” to the question “would you leave your country and go live somewhere else permanently if you had the chance”. This research is interesting in that it gives us a glimpse of our contemporary time. The youth declares here at 77% that even if a young person has the talents necessary to succeed, somebody else who has fewer merits than that person can take their place if they have the right connections. This shows that young people feel that they will not be treated justly and fairly in life or in the job market. (ibid., p. 108) Another interesting part of this research is that, to the question “how has your life changed in the past 5 years?”, 42.6% answered that it has changed in a negative way and only 21.5% replied that it has changed in a positive way. (ibid., p. 141) 40.6% of the

youth expects their lives to become worse in the next 5 years while only 16.9% expects it to become better, with %30.6 not expecting a substantial change towards better or worse. (ibid., p.152) note that they think that justice and the economy are currently the most important problems of the country. Another interesting point is that only 16% of the participants declared not to have any debts, while %84 declared they had, (ibid., p. 158).

The 2018 work of research by Lüküslü et al. does not directly aim to assess the future expectations of the youth but its findings carry implications in this direction. (Lüküslü et al., 2018) This research aims to assess the experiences, perceptions and opinions of the youth and to what extent these show similarities and differences based on different political allegiances. The research is carried out on youth that are classified as secular or religious, with the main objective to find out to what extent there is a potential for religious and secular youth negotiating and taking joint stances in shared political projects. (ibid., p. 3-4) The second chapter of this work includes findings from questions relating to the anxieties, fears and hopes of the youth. (ibid., p. 31-55) Participants of this research have been asked how much they are worried about certain scenarios, such as the partition of Turkey, Turkey going into war with neighboring countries, a terrorist attack, the restriction of freedoms or an economic crisis. In the same section youth are also asked about their worries relating to their individual development. The research finds out that with regard to individual expectations there is no significant difference between religious and secular youth. (ibid., p. 44) With regard to their fears and hopes in country-level matters the youth differs significantly, although religious and secular young women share the hope of living in a society where women are more free, and all youth have expressed worry about the restrictions of freedoms. (ibid., p. 7)

Among works of research on the future expectations of youth carried out in other parts of the world, the 1983 article by Borghi describes a study undertaken in 1977 on the youth in England, France and Italy that seeks to “investigate the image of the future held by youth in different parts of Western Europe” and to test the hypothesis that there was “a cleavage between the northern culture and a Mediterranean culture”. (Borghi, 1983, p. 270) However, the research concludes that young people’s future outlooks are determined more by their

awareness of social and political circumstances defining their lives than by a cultural cleavage. (Borghi, 1983, p. 271) Another research in 1983 that sought to examine the future expectations of rural American youth concludes that a great percentage of youth imagines a life elsewhere, and that women more than men want to leave their communities to move elsewhere. (Murray et al., 1983, p. 82) This paper seeks to find solutions for the deterioration of rural communities as young people with more aspiring educational and career expectations plan to leave their communities. A research in 1992 examines gender differences in the future narratives of adolescents. A quantitative survey reveals, confirming previous observations, that females are more pessimistic than males in their future expectancy. (Greene & Wheatley, 1992, p. 681)

A number of studies demonstrate that young people's expectations for their lives correlate with their socio-economic background. A quantitative study in 2013 that measured the expectation of life of youth living in communities of the USA found out that this expectation had to do both with the characteristics of the individual and the neighborhood that they live in. (Swisher & Warner, 2013, p. 690) Moving to a "better" neighborhood, especially speaking from within the context of the USA where low-income neighborhoods have higher levels of violence, has an impact on the sense of safety and therefore on the life expectancy of the individual. (ibid., p. 691) Being able to move to a more affluent neighborhood more often than not has to do with the subject's socioeconomic status. The "area effect" or the "neighborhood effect", which is demonstrated by a number of quantitative studies of which the aforementioned is an example, is qualitatively researched in a study in 2004 on how social workers working in these neighborhoods perceive this effect. (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2004) Area effects, or the dependence of life expectations on the neighborhood where one lives, "are a daily reality consisting of norms and stories about what the people from an area can aspire to or achieve." (ibid., p. 453)

A number of studies link delinquency and despair. In a multi-methods analysis of 2009 that seeks to elaborate the link between anticipated early death and youth crime, the researchers refer to the concept of "futurelessness" and discuss how futurelessness, low expectations for the future, may result in the individual carrying out activities (such as criminal behavior) that

aggravate the sense of futurelessness. (Brezina et al., 2009, p. 1120) Another quantitative study on life expectancy among adults in the USA concludes that “achieved socio-economic status influences subjective life expectancy”. (Mirowsky & Ross, 2000, p. 145) The findings suggest a “sharp awareness of risk due to economic failure. Recent economic hardship subtracts about seven or eight years from the anticipated length of life. The sharp effects of economic hardship appear to fade when and if the crisis passes, but they never seem to disappear entirely”. (ibid., p. 146)

In their longitudinal study on adolescents’ future orientation, Trommsdorff et al. have found that the future orientation of individuals is affected by changes in the objective environment where subjects enter different social roles or reach a different position in their personal development. (Trommsdorff et al., 1979, p. 142) Therefore future perspectives or future orientation can be “a product of social conditions” (ibid., p. 146) a finding that is supported by other works that have been referred to in this chapter.

3. Research Question and Context

This study aims to find out what are the future expectations of youth in Turkey and how these expectations are affected by their political allegiances. Behind this question is the other latent question, of how the crisis has affected expectations and how this impact is narrated by different identities. The following chapter seeks to explain why these questions go together, with the aim to demonstrate the theoretical framework informing this research.

Discourses from youth often intertwine with discourses about youth. The changes in communication technologies and the wide use of social media mean that the voices of the youth are heard more often and more easily, even when this does not alter their level of access to decision-making mechanisms in the societies where they live. This category was not always conceived as being powerless, though. All modernizing ideologies have given specific importance to youth and have tried to shape this social category. (Lüküslü, 2020, p. 340) The category of youth is actually a category that has appeared with the modern age, in Europe as well as in what was later to become modern Turkey. (Lüküslü, 2009, p. 2) Lüküslü argues the myth around youth that has existed in Turkey since the founders of the modern Republic, the so-called Young Turks, is a pattern that is repeated in some other modernizing projects around the world. She points out that the tradition of seeing the “youth” as a political category in Turkey disappeared after the coup d’état of 1980 which sought to put an end to the “anarchy” caused by youth political mobilization. (ibid., p. 4) Therefore we need to keep in mind that the widespread view that the youth are a voiceless social category that needs to be represented is a view that is very much shaped and determined by the conditions of our era.

When are people young? International bodies have a few designations of what age constitutes youth but there seems to be no international (or even local) standard that defines until what age a person is young. Pierre Bourdieu captures this situation clearly in a 1992 interview titled “Youth is but a word”. (Bourdieu, 1992) Whether an individual belongs to the category of youth or not has to do with their status, whether they are seen as young or adult depending on their status in life. (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 144) He gives the example of how

working-class boys want to finish school as soon as possible so that they can start earning money and spend that money on outings with their friends and girlfriends. The example of unmarried women in traditional societies who forever seem stuck in the category of childhood can be thought of as another example. Some works in the literature on transition from youth to adulthood demonstrate that this process which used to be much more linear in the earlier generations, has become much more complicated and less straightforward. (Furlong et al., 2011) Neoliberalism plays a role in complicating this process, making people dependent on their families for a longer time and keeping them in a situation of in-betweenness between youth and adulthood. (Lüküslü, 2020, p. 343) In light of these findings in the literature, the threshold for youth in this research is set at mid-30's, so that declarations coming from people in a situation of such in-betweenness can be included in our data set.

The changes that modern societies have gone under after the Second World War have affected the youth, just like they have affected the rest of society. Gary Pollock in his 1997 study demonstrates how changes in the job market after the Second World War has affected especially the young members of the working class. Unlike previous generations, the generation that came after the 1970's was no longer able to make simple future predictions that would seem like a matter of fact to previous generations. (Pollock, 1997) As a result, many young people today, says Pollock in 1997, are in a more uncertain position than the previous generations ever found themselves. (ibid., p. 616) The lack of jobs and employment uncertainty in the European context is captured by Lauren Berlant in her work *Cruel Optimism*, in which she discusses how precarity and the unavailability of the promises of the society such as “going up the ladder” bear on the lives of individuals. (Berlant, 2011) What she calls “the crisis within the ordinary” is triggered by the neoliberal economic practices that increase the instability of the employment market. (ibid., p. 192) As subjects struggle to find modes of living on, of surviving within the system, children inherit from adults “the promise of the promise”, they inherit the fantasy of a good life. (ibid., p. 174)

An individual's future perceptions affect their trajectory of life. Perceptions about the future are a social force and they affect to what extent an individual will show perseverance

or agency when faced with obstacles. (Johnson & Hitlin, 2015, p. 1434) Unrealistic future expectations might indeed serve to reconstruct existing power structures, but it is also true that they help the individual cope, as is demonstrated in this study on bypass surgery patients, among others. (Scheier et al., 1989) Future expectations, optimism or pessimism about the future is an aspect of individual agency. (Johnson & Hitlin, 2015, p. 1441) Future expectations have a role in how individuals will move within their lives, how much effort they will show or in which direction they will show these efforts. Therefore it is important to look into how optimistic the youth is about their future, as long as we don't lose focus of what this optimism consists of - because as Berlant points out, optimism can be cruel when it attaches desire to objects that actively prevent the flourishing of the subject. (Berlant, 2011, p. 1)

The juxtaposition of discussions about youth with discussions and declarations about the future is quite common. It almost goes without saying that young people have most of their life ahead of them unlike other age groups who have them in the past, and therefore young people are more related with the future. However, there are a few more reasons why youth and future should be studied together. Demet Lüküslü, points out that an economic crisis hits the youth harder than other social categories. (Lüküslü, 2020, p. 342) This is also presumably because a young individual is at the beginning of her life, with fewer structures holding this life together, unlike older people who have more stable lives that have already been determined by previous choices. Therefore looking into young people's narratives will give us a better ground in identifying the impact of crisis within a society.

What is a crisis? Etymologically the term crisis comes from the ancient Greek root verb κρίνω. Historian Reinhart Koselleck in his conceptual history approach explains that even though the term was used in the political discourse in Ancient Greece in relation to citizens' judgment, this usage did not continue throughout the centuries. The term crisis entered modern social and political language moving on from its medical use which originates in the *Corpus Hippocratum*. In this usage crisis "refers both to the observable condition and to the judgment about the course of the illness. At such a time it will be determined whether the patient will live or die." (Koselleck, 2006, p. 360) In modern social and political language the

term was first used metaphorically moving on from its meaning as a medical term. In its modern usage, the term crisis “indicates a point in time in which a decision is due but has not yet been rendered.” In this usage of the term, there is the presupposition of a state of health, normality, that will either be restored or the crisis will lead to death. (ibid., p. 361) From the mid-18th century onward the term means “radical change”, and is widely used in political discourses. By the mid-19th century, in Germany the term “crisis” was conceived also economically, and with the influence of Marx’s thought crises came to be seen as global occurrences caused by capitalism itself. (ibid., p. 389) The Marxist theory of history held that this process would be repeated in cyclical crises until it finally destroyed capitalism. (ibid, p. 395)

This expectation has not come true. On the contrary, there are numerous writers contemporary to our age such as Berlant who claim that crisis in the neoliberal age is the normal mode of living for a great part of the society. According to Berlant “across diverse geopolitical and biopolitical locations, the present moment increasingly imposes itself on consciousness as a moment in extended crisis, with one happening piling on another.” (Berlant, 2011, p. 7) The neoliberal era seems to present a situation where crises linger on and add up, one over the other. The historical present becomes an impasse where the urgencies of livelihood are worked out all over again, without assurances of futurity, but nevertheless proceeding via durable norms of adaptation”. (ibid., p. 200) An ongoing, continuous crisis is a moment stuck in time. A survey into people’s future expectations in the long moment of a crisis can be a guide to understanding the characteristics, or dimensions of that crisis.

It is widely accepted that Turkey since August 2018 is going through a debt and currency crisis. Arguably this is not the only crisis or the only aspect of the crisis that Turkey has been enduring in the last decade. Before the economic crisis was a crisis of politics and civil society, which had as its climax the period with many incidents of public violence, starting in the summer of 2015, continuing with the coup attempt in the summer of 2016 and transforming into widespread repression in the public sphere soon after. With a referendum in April 2017 that was carried out under the state of emergency ongoing since the coup attempt

of 2016, Turkey transitioned from a parliamentary government system to a presidential one. This period was a crisis, an impasse and a moment in which the subjects were stuck. The term crisis however has been used to describe the situation in Turkey mainly after the start of the economic crisis, therefore in the last 3-4 years. Translated into the economy and into the ability of people to cater to their daily needs, the crisis takes a more realistic tone. For the citizens and residents of Turkey today the crisis is an immediate reality, since the depreciating value of the lira directly reflects on the consumer prices in a dependent domestic market. This simple fact, however, becomes a highly politicized matter with widespread disagreement on who is causing the crisis, and how.

The question of who is causing the crisis can be tackled from within other disciplines and through other approaches. The cause of the crisis, moreover, may not be the essence of the crisis. What a crisis is really about can be understood by assessing the impact that it creates on individuals and society. It is likely to have an impact on the emotions that relate to the future. Hopes and fears of individuals are likely to be affected by crises, since crises can be thought of as impasses in time. Sara Ahmed argues that emotions do work of creating social and psychic surfaces, by making bodies move towards or away from each other. (Ahmed, 2014, p. 10) Emotions accumulate on objects and they spread through the circulation of the objects of emotion. Therefore people's emotions will neither be individual, unique, nor only dependent on the nature of the object. Emotions are the result of repeated interactions and in turn, they shape their object as well as being shaped by it, producing boundaries and surfaces. (ibid., p.8) They can build social boundaries, make or break units. Assessing the future related emotions of young people living in current Turkey in crisis can provide an understanding also of the socio-cultural divide(s) and political polarization in Turkey, as it will give us a picture of which objects accumulate which emotions, and how they circulate in the public sphere.

4. Method and Data

We would like to find out what the future expectations of young people living in Turkey are, and how these expectations vary based on their political allegiances. A quantitative method of analysis could be used to carry out this research. In such an analysis the researcher would prepare a questionnaire to distribute to the participants of the research. The questionnaire would include questions to determine the political allegiance of participants, such as “which party would you vote for if there were elections this weekend?”, and questions about how much participants agree with certain remarks about future expectations, such as “in the future I will not have economic worries” or “in 5 years I will be in a better situation than today”. This kind of research is carried out in Turkey in intervals, such as the 2018 work by Lüküslü et al. or the work carried out in 1999 by the Center for Social Research. The findings of a study done with a quantitative method would reveal which percentage of youth voting for a particular political party is worried about or hopeful for a particular future scenario. These findings however would not help us to understand how these worries and hopes are located in relation to each other, how they cross into each other and make sense, moving on from each other.

This work employs thematic analysis, a method of qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible method of data analysis that seeks to identify patterns and themes in a given set of data without being “tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective”. (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 2) Most of the existing literature that uses thematic analysis gives reference to the works by Braun and Clarke, who have sought to systematize this method of analysis. According to Braun and Clarke thematic analysis “involves searching across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning”. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86) It involves a constant movement within and across the whole data set to find these patterns of meanings, the themes, from which a narration of the results can be made. (ibid., p. 94)

Braun and Clarke maintain that a work of thematic analysis needs to clearly outline the assumptions and the theoretical framework that inform the work. (ibid., 81) This is important so that the reader can make sense of the analysis that has been made and judge whether the researcher has made the right decisions during the analysis. In thematic analysis, a series of decisions need to be made as to how the data will be analyzed, and the analysis needs to

make these decisions clear and explicit. (ibid., p. 82) The decision about the themes that are found in the data set, is one such decision. A theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning in the data set.” (ibid., p. 82) A theme has to be a repeated pattern. But the number of times a theme has been repeated does not make it more central or more crucial for the analysis. What makes a theme key to analysis is the extent to which “it captures something important concerning the overall research question.” (ibid., p. 82)

Thematic analysis necessitates rich and detailed descriptions of the data set or its aspects. (ibid., p. 83) This is meant to familiarize the reader with the data. The researcher needs to explain the data set, since there will be readers of the work who will be uninterested or unable to read the data set. (ibid., p. 95) The final outcome of the analysis must be able to produce an account of how the analysis moved on from the data, and why. (ibid., p. 86) With data that have been adequately described and detailed, the analysis can take on an inductive or a theoretical form - that is, it can work on semantic themes or latent themes. (ibid., p. 83) Semantic themes are based on the “surface” of the data and they stop at what the data tell us. Latent themes can be used to scratch this surface to see what this data means in a broader context - a context which is informed by the theoretical framework of the research. It is better to move from semantic themes towards latent themes. (ibid., p. 84) Themes should be coherent by themselves and in relation to each other, cover the whole data set and provide an interpretation of the data. (ibid., p.94)

This research implements thematic analysis on a data set consisting of the declarations of young individuals about how they see their future. The data have been collected in two different ways. The primary set of data has been collected through semi-structured interviews that have been conducted with 13 individuals under the age of 35, over a period of two months, in physical encounters or over the phone. Participants have been reached through announcements on social media and in physical encounters. Snowball sampling method has been used to find the participants of this research. The interviews have been transcribed and searched for their codes, from which the themes of the data set have been extracted. These findings are discussed in the first section of the next chapter, ‘Results and Analysis’.

Even though care was shown to gather participants from different regions, occupations and statuses, the changing research question brought with it the concern that the number of

interviews that were carried out were too small and the sample may not be representative enough of the general population that was the subject of the research question. Also, the absence of some points in the data set was creating suspicions that the data that has been gathered could be biased. Anti-refugee discourse, for instance, was simply non-existent in the interviews of this research while in social media it seemed rampant and closely related to discourses about the economic crisis. Therefore a second set of data had to be gathered on which to further the analysis.

This second set of data was gathered from street interviews. Street interview is a social media genre that has reached great popularity in Turkey, where a cameraman and a reporter ask questions to passers-by on the streets of urban centers and most often, in Istanbul. The genre is carried out mostly by independent young journalists, although national and local TV channels from time to time send reporters to make street interviews. These interviews are mostly carried out on busy pedestrian spots, such as crowded main streets of neighborhoods or weekly neighborhood markets. In street interviews, the conversation rarely stays between the reporter and the respondent. Often, people nearby will intervene to agree or to disagree with the respondent and the interview turns into a public debate. This is far from a safe space where people can voice their opinions. The interviews are surveilled, the consciousness of which is often seen in respondent declarations. At least three YouTubers who have reached popularity with their street interviews have been put under house arrest in December 2021.⁴

Some of the street interviews were found to include questions very similar to the ones that were used in one-on-one interviews conducted for this research, such as “What are your worries about the future?” or “how do you see your future?” Especially when a teenager or a person in their early teens approach the microphone, the reporters ask questions related to the future. In some interviews, the young respondents do not wait to be asked and refer to their future expectations spontaneously. To pull out a data set from these interviews, a large number of the street interviews that were uploaded to YouTube in August 2021 and later were scanned to assess which street interviews uploaded on YouTube contained youth declarations about their future expectations. Each video that becomes a data item and is used

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<https://www.dw.com/tr/sokak-r%C3%B6portaj%C4%B1-yapan-%C3%BC%C3%A7-youtubera-ev-hapsi/av-60108978>

in the analysis, is described and numbered in the following section and the URLs of these videos are listed in the Bibliography chapter. Entire transcripts of the videos are not provided as this would load the text with raw data. Instead, the videos are described in light of the themes that have been reached in the analysis of the first set of data, collected from one-on-one interviews carried out by the researcher.

5. Results and Analysis

The results of this research are presented and analyzed in two sub-chapters or sections. The first section sets out the findings from one-on-one interviews that have been conducted for this research, and presents the themes that have been identified. The second section presents some excerpts from street interviews, to demonstrate how these themes are used and exchanged during public discourses.

A. One-on-one interviews

A total of 13 semi-structured interviews have been carried out between August and October 2021, over the phone, and in a few instances face to face. At the beginning of each interview, the research and the researcher were introduced. The respondents were told that the research was on the future expectations of young people in their country, and that their responses would be recorded and used. The respondents, people below the age of 35 willing to participate, were found through announcements in social media and encounters in the urban space. The respondents are from Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Konya and Edirne. They have been asked a short set of questions about their future expectations - if they have specific expectations for the future, where they see themselves in 5 or 10 years, how do they hope their life will be, what do they fear will happen, what is an ideal life setting for them and where they can turn to in case of things going wrong in their life. Often after the questions were finished, respondents added a few more points that they found important to add to their narratives. Respondents here have not been referred to with their names or pseudonyms but with numbers, ranging from Y1 to Y15. The characteristics of each participant (their place of residence, their age, the work that they do) are given in passing where the participants are quoted.

Leaving the country. A repeating theme that became discernible very early in the research was the concern about living in Turkey. A significant number of total respondents and all of the respondents under the age of 25 expressed concern about living in Turkey. This concern was not always negative, it could also turn into a positive attachment. When it was

negative though, in more than one interview, this concern was raised before anything else was said. Respondent Y1, a 24-year old barista working in a coffee shop in Istanbul, replied to the first question on whether she has specific expectations, saying that she has no expectations but leaving Turkey. *“The economic conditions are very bad. I quit my studies because I won’t get anywhere by studying here. I want to do what my friends did, to go abroad to work as a barista. I want to go to a foreign country. I don’t care where. It is enough that it is foreign.”* Respondent Y9, a 19-year old waitress in Izmir also started the interview by expressing the desire to leave Turkey. In her first statement about her expectations, she declared: *“I want to live in a country where I can be happy and where I will feel free. Not in Turkey therefore. I want to have a job that will make me happy. That’s what my expectations are all about.”* Others expressed fear that they may not be able to leave, further in the conversation. Y5, a queer person living in Ankara, said that they feared not being able to leave. *“I am a person that flees. I flee uneasy situations. I flee intense conversations. I don’t like face-offs. Such situations really disturb me and since I have experienced such traumatic situations in the past, I might react physically. And I fear in the future that I may be unable to flee.”* A similar concern existed also for Y2, a 29-year old teaching assistant living in Ankara who holds a Turkish as well as a German passport. But she does not need to worry about this since she has a lifejacket. She says that if things go wrong, she trusts the German citizenship that she has, which gives her the ability to go and live in Europe if/when she finds it necessary. Still, she says that she does not want to go. *“A good future for me is where I have a good tenure, where I am able to carry on with my work properly while I am living in Turkey. That would be the best scenario.”*

Two male university students, both in their late teens, referred to the theme of leaving Turkey in ways that reply to each other in their respective interviews. Y14, a 19-year old university student in Edirne, was one of those who were overly concerned about living in Turkey and started the interview by saying that in the future he wants to live abroad. *“My main expectation from the future is to be able to go abroad. Youth in Turkey don’t have great expectations apart from that. I would like to be able to stay in Turkey, to build a business here for myself and to work in a way that I like. But all of the things that I fear, they keep on happening one after the other. Economically, mainly.”* For another male university student,

18 year-old Y15 from Konya, the concern for leaving was linked to the economic situation. *“For me going abroad is just about choosing the easy way. We need to produce if we want to fix the economy.”*

Economic limitations. Worries and complaints related to the economy make up the second prominent theme that can be discerned in the responses given by youth who participated in the survey. Almost all of the respondents are concerned about their economic prospects, although with different emotional approaches. Y15 thinks that youth should not choose the easy way of leaving the country but they should stay here and produce, and yet he is worried that he will not succeed. He is the descendant of a family of retailers that sell automobile parts. *“I am scared of the economic prospects. Business can go down, I may not be able to make sales. If people don’t have the money to ride automobiles then I won’t have anybody to sell to.”* Then he reminds himself that of all the people, he is probably not the one to worry so much about economic failure. *“What if I am not able to get where I want? What if I can’t start the business that I want? I think I can do it though. We already have a retail shop. At worst I can get some loan and develop the business.”* Y13, a 20-year old student living in Ankara and a refugee from Afghanistan, is also worried. *“Right now for me to continue with my education the most important thing is the material support I get from my family. This is my only fear. I may not be able to realize my dreams if my family cannot support me and I cannot continue my education. But if this is the case then I will have to find a solution. I cannot just stop studying because my family cannot support me.”* Towards the end of the interview, Y13 notes that this worry is unnecessary for his case. *“In the last few years we have grown a lot economically. My family has made a lot of money in the last three years. We don’t have economic problems in the family. My brother opened a company in Istanbul. He gave me 30% of the shares. If I sell these shares I will get a few hundred thousand liras.”* While both Y13 and Y15 come from families of entrepreneurs, apparently with some degree of basic capital, Y14 who is another male university student from the same age group, looks forward to leaving the country for economic salvation. After affirming that he wants to go abroad because he will not be able to build a business here, he adds: *“I don’t want to be somebody who lives day to day on minimum wage, who lives between work and*

home. I want to be able to follow my dreams.” Y14 has declared that he comes from a working-class family where both of his parents are industrial workers.

Work insufficiency emerges as a subtheme within the economic concerns. A significant span of participants’ discourses had to do with the worries that their work would not satisfy them, materially or spiritually. For Y2, a teaching assistant with a German passport, being able to provide for her life and not working out of obligation is a prominent expectation. *“I would be happy if I feel that I am not working just because I have to. I will be happy also if my job helps me cover my needs. I am scared of working somewhere because I have to. I am scared that work will take up all my time. Work makes me scared.”* Y1 says that she quit her studies because she didn’t see them leading her anywhere: *“I don’t believe I can become anything here, even if I study.”* Y8 who is another 24-year old female service worker in a restaurant says: *“Even though I studied at the university I cannot say that I will become this or that because I studied.”* She has studied to become a teacher and since her graduation she is one of the great number of teachers who are waiting to be appointed in the public sector. Y9 confirms these declarations: *“Here we cannot get anywhere no matter how hard we try. So that’s not a good life. A good life is about getting the results of your endeavors.”*

Rising prices and the rising cost of life constitute a latent subtheme in a number of the interviews. It is never the core of the discussion but it is referred to as a serious side effect. Y9 says: *“OK, maybe money does not matter so much but unemployment is rising and everything is getting more and more expensive. I am unable to afford my living standards even though I am working. And that’s very bad.”* The worry about falling living standards and the inability of a working person to afford their own life conditions come up most frequently in the responses of the working youth, or of youth that comes from working class families. Y14 says that he does not want to receive the minimum wage, as a reaction to the knowledge that most workers are receiving the minimum wage and most likely he will too, if he stays here and becomes a worker like his parents. For Y7, a 33 year-old worker in a shopping mall, the bad scenario is already here. *“I don’t have any expectations. It makes you upset to have expectations. The bad scenario is already taking place. Hunger. Unemployment. These are already here.”* This concern, although less pronounced, shows up also in the interviews with

non-working people. Y11 who is a 28-year old mother and homemaker in Konya says that she is giving up some dreams. *“I am fine with the neighborhood where I live. We own the house where we live, I wouldn’t like to change it. I would love to be able to buy that BMW that I have been dreaming of. But that’s not happening. Not under these circumstances. Our economic situation is not as good as it used to be. And it looks like it will get worse. Prices are rising and our income is not rising at the same pace. Price hikes are much faster.”*

Duty and obligation. The situation that the country finds itself in is perceived by many respondents to create obligations on them. Y5 who said that they found it very important to be able to flee, rationalizes this choice by referring to those others who want to stay and to fight: *“ I am not one of those people that say ‘we must stay here and fight for change’. I am not like that. I want to go to where the change is, to just escape there. This is the easiest way for me.”* Y5 is not the only respondent who thinks that running away is the easier option. Y15 has a similar opinion about the easy choice of the fight or flight option. *“Turkey has been going through troubles since many centuries, because of its geography. There will always be these problems. Going abroad seems to me to be an easy way out.”* For Y15 continuing with the family business is his duty. He believes that the economic situation has to be fought off through economic activities. *“We need to produce and we need to sell. I want to be in the sales part of this process.”*

The theme of duty and obligation is most clearly pronounced in the responses of Y13, a young immigrant from Afghanistan and a university student. *“I see myself as a person who has come to this world to be useful to his nation, and who will serve his nation in the future. I will never give up on developing myself for my nation. I will always work for the continuity and the stability of my nation. I will never give up on my nation.”* The nation for this young Afghan immigrant is the Turkish nation. *“When I say my nation I mean the Turks. It is not just a country or two that Turks constitute. Turks make up the whole world. The whole world has fought against the Turks. We as the youth of this nation must study our history, we must think about our future and we must work to be servants to Turkishness.”* It is striking to note here that among all the respondents and even among the respondents that declared that they have voted for the AKP government in the past, Y13, an immigrant from Afghanistan, is the

only one to have referred to the current government of Turkey in clearly positive terms. *“I take President Erdoğan as an example for myself. I will endeavor to continue in his path and to serve the Republic of Turkey. I want to serve the poor people and I want to protect their rights. I don’t want anything for myself. I don’t have material expectations. I have come to this world as a servant and I will leave as a servant. Education is important. I want to continue with my studies, to obtain a masters’ degree and a PhD. We must have good friends. Then we have to think about work. Because without money you cannot do anything in this world. I want to build companies, to make them work well, and then I want to get into politics.”* In his speech Y13, feels the need to support the government against criticism that are pronounced even by his very close friends. *“My friends who used to support him in the past have now cut this support because of the economic situation. They get angry at me when I say I support him. OK, maybe he has done some bad things. But he has opened Hagia Sophia (as a mosque). I go there and I cry.”*

Violence and repression. Another theme that emerges from the responses given by the participants in the interview is violence and repression. It deserves attention that references to violence and oppression are found mainly in the responses given by female and queer participants and that worries related to violence and oppression take up more space in their discourses. Y2 who says that she wants to be able to work and live in Turkey notes that being able to find a proper job is not the only condition for her to be able to continue her life in Turkey. *“If I keep on feeling that I am not free in my country, that’s a big problem. In this sense I wouldn’t want to be in the situation where I am now, or in a worse situation.”* Y4 refers to anxiety about losing one’s freedom. *“For me the worries are about losing my freedom. This is really what it is all about. And this looks likely to happen.”* This theme, like most of the other themes, is perceived in a direct link with the issue of leaving Turkey. *“The choice here is: do we stay here and fight or do we run away in order to keep our freedom?”* For Y9 the choice is clear: *“We are not free here.”* Y8, whose first response was about wanting to leave Turkey, says that she is *“scared that our society will turn into a conservative fundamentalist society. We already are like that but I am scared that it might get worse. I am scared that I as a woman might one day be unable to work as I like or that I might be forced to wear the hijab at some point. I am scared that women may not be allowed to drive at some*

point in the future. That we might become like those Arab countries.” She says that her main wish for the future of her country and of the world is for it to be a “more free place, where people care more about human rights and women’s rights and where women are valued more than they currently are.”

Y11, a 28-year old mother, expresses worry about the casual violence that she or her children might encounter in daily life. She says that she is against the understanding that sees health workers or education workers as untouchable. *“If a doctor humiliates me and insults me, I need to show a reaction. If a teacher attempts to hit my child I need to react. A doctor does not have the right to insult me. One day my older child was sick and I took him to the doctor. The doctor told me he has tonsillitis and when I didn’t understand he was like ‘you expect me to lecture you on medicine now, just check your phone’. I didn’t say anything out of respect for his age. But since this incident whenever I go to the doctor I voice-record the consultation so that I can show it to the authorities in case it is necessary. They are very used to dealing with uneducated people and they see themselves as superior.”* Y11 also expresses that she would like to be able to study to become a medical doctor, a gynecologist, but having had children this is no longer possible for her. The hierarchic exchange that takes place between a patient and a doctor and the symbolic violence of these exchanges seems to problematize her. *“My former gynecologist, who was a man, did not like to meet with pregnant women who were knowledgeable. He wanted the women to not try to learn much and to just do what he said. So I changed my doctor; I picked a woman doctor who wanted me to educate myself and to obtain knowledge. Some doctors and teachers want their patients and students to be stupid and ignorant.”* For Y11 there is a clear-cut distinction as to who can practice violence and how. *“I pray to God to make my children reasonable, to make them meet with good people, so that I can preserve my patience if something happens. I will react very harshly if I hear that their teacher has hit them in school. I might hit my child lightly if necessary but their father cannot hit them.”*

Gender-based violence is a point of concern for a significant number of the young women that have been interviewed. Y11, the mother, says that she is scared of the future because *“our people have turned bad. On the streets there is a lot sexual harassment going on. I pay a*

lot of attention to this, even though I have boys. I make my boys do household chores. I take care not to treat them in a privileged way just because they are boys. Now I am expecting a daughter. I will take care not to bring her up in the classical way that the girls are brought up.” Y1 says that her biggest fear is gender-based violence. *“I am not scared for myself but for all the women living in Turkey. I am scared of the incidents of violence, harassment and rape. These are the things that scare me the most.”* It is important to note here that Y11 has said that she comes from a conservative background and that they have supported the government in the past. Her declarations suggest that in the society at large there is a reaction against incidents of gender-based violence and people are trying to make changes within their own spheres of influence to prevent such violence.

A final addition to the theme of violence and repression is social freedoms. Y8 notes that economic difficulties lead to a reduction of social outings. She says *“the youth will have to struggle for their social lives. A student needs to be able to go to the cinema, or a parent needs to be able to spend a weekend with their kids.”* The need for art and the necessity of freedom of expression for art is referred to by respondent Y7, the only cis-male whose declarations relate to the theme of violence and repression. He says that his *“nightmare scenario is that I might be left one day with no access to works of art and literature. My main support in life is the authors that I read. The censorship of art is my biggest fear.”*

Hope for change. A final theme that can be discerned in the declarations of respondents is the existence of hope. All respondents refer to hope, even though their hope can be made up of different constituents. For Y6, an otherwise laconic 30-year old male interviewee who has spoken with few words and does not profess to have any expectations, the possibility that nothing might change is an unbearable scenario. *“I am scared that it will go on like this. My biggest fear is that nothing will change.”* He says that he believes in the society, or he believes that part of the society is reasonable and sensitive. *“This stops me from feeling lonely. If there is any solution that we can find I believe that we will find it here. We will find it in each other, within us.”*

The fear that nothing might change has been expressed in very much the same way by a few other participants. Y2, who is a white-collar worker and the bearer of a German passport, says that she is afraid of having to continue living in the same situation. Referring to the lack of freedom of expression in Turkey she says: *“I wouldn’t want to be living in the same situation as now. Or in a worse situation. It has to change. Right now the only hope that I have is the hope things will change for the better. The situation as it is right now is not very sustainable. Not for me at least.”* Y3, a queer social worker from Ankara says that he is looking forward to the elections that legally have to take place in 2023, after which he says he will have to decide whether to stay in Turkey or not. *“In this case (where AKP wins in the elections) I would go abroad for a few years to take a breath, where I can observe Turkey in peace for a few years before coming back afterwards. I am somebody who lives with possibilities. We need to hold on to life. Tomorrow can be a much better day therefore I don’t need to die today. In 2023 if they win the elections it will be a horrible day. But the next day can be nice and with this possibility in mind I can go on in life with new plans. Still I believe that 2023 will be a turning point, not just for me but for the whole country.”* Y3 holds on to the hope for change that an electoral loss of the AKP will bring to Turkey. Y8, who has expressed that her greatest fear is that Turkey might become a place like Saudi Arabia, says that she is hopeful about the new generation. *“The youth today are quite conscious. I hope they will not be restricted by their families. My hope is about them, I believe that they will make a better future and give more value to freedom and to free thinking. I believe they will improve their social as well as private lives.”*

The one-on-one interviews that have been carried out for this research can be explained around these five themes: leaving the country, economic limitations, duty and obligation, violence and repression and hope for change. These themes are all linked to one another but one theme, that of leaving the country, is central in that other themes refer to this theme more often than to the others.

B. Street Interviews

In this section, street interviews that are eligible to enter our data set (i.e. that include declarations and narratives about youth future expectations) are briefly described and excerpts relevant to the research question are translated. Translations are loyal but not word-to-word. The time code of each excerpt is given in brackets. Street interviews in their totality constitute a different data corpus. In these interviews people often refer to what has happened or what has been said in previous interviews, creating a body of exchanges. The setting where these exchanges take place is quite unlike the setting of the one-on-one interviews that constitute the first data set. Unlike the one-on-one interviews where the researcher tries to make space for the respondent and tries to act ethically, in street interviews participants are exposed. People challenge each others' opinions harshly, and often have to shout over one another to make their voices heard. Conflicts of opinion might turn into clashes where violence is exerted. Even when conflicts do not take place, the people participating in the interview anticipate a conflict and prepare to react accordingly. The interviews that were carried out for this research in secluded settings were less charged with emotion than any street interview. The one-on-one interviews of this research were all softer, smoother, and more peaceful, arguably because during these interviews people felt more accepted and less needy for explaining themselves. Whereas on street interviews there is a clash, a heated discussion as people try to explain themselves, try to justify their claims and live out the disagreement. This means that they express more, get triggered to tell more, and perhaps with different foci. These are situations where emotions are carried out - people shouting at each other, showing, expressing their emotions. Indeed in current Turkey where the public sphere and public discussions are strangled to a great extent, the street interviews create and enable spaces where people of different backgrounds and affiliations can meet and talk to each other on public subjects. These interviews are where the political and socio-cultural differences in Turkey are played out. These points do not mean that the declarations by youth participating in street interviews have no value or all the value, but that they need to be handled with care as a data set. In the scope of this work, excerpts from street interviews are used to illustrate the themes that have been identified in the interviews that constitute the primary data set of this research.

In this section, we describe five scenes from street interviews uploaded to three different channels on YouTube in December 2021. We choose some interviews as our data items. The volume of street interviews that can be found online are huge even for a limited time period, so we only looked at parts of interviews where youth are talking about their future expectations or mentioning these.

SI.1 Istanbul, Eminönü. December 2021.

A young-looking thin woman with long black hair, wearing a mask, is asked by the reporter if she is content with the economy. There are other people in front of the camera. She approaches the camera and starts to explain her reasons for discontent. She says that she has asked her boss to stop paying for her social security, to keep her as an undeclared worker and give her the money that would be paid for the social security every month. (3:20) *What difference does it make if I become retired when I am 55, 60 years-old? ... I cannot see the future of my 7 year-old niece. Because if she tells me "Aunt, can you buy me this?" and I cannot buy it for her, then there is no future. There is no purchasing power.* An older woman enters the picture, asking her: *"How old are you? Do you remember the 1980's, the 1983's (sic). When were you born?"* Later we learn that the young woman is 36 years old. The older woman keeps on shouting towards the young woman and towards the microphone: *"It is not nice to condemn your homeland. You are disturbed by too much comfort. You won't be satisfied even if they load you with trucks"* (i.e. if you have a lot of everything). The young woman resumes her speech after the older one leaves. She refers to having to wait in the traffic for long hours while going to work, because her work is located in the vicinity of Erdoğan's house in Istanbul. (7:20) She says that she should not be judged because her hair is loose, and that the government is judging women because of their hair.

SI.2 Istanbul, Bağcılar, December 2021.

A young woman is complaining to the reporter about the economic hardships that she and her family are going through. The reporter asks her if she can "live her dreams" as a young person in this country. *"No, no I cannot live my dream."* The crowd around her claps their

hands in support. *“You know why I cannot live my dreams? Because there is no money, no money. When other people are living in luxury I go all the way from Bağcılar to Kadıköy to get a pair of jeans for 30 TL, because it is much cheaper. Why? It is not just about clothes. I am a person who wants to study. And what is going to happen if I get to study? Will they give me a job when I finish my studies? No they won't. But at least I will have my diploma at hand and I can say that I have graduated from the university. So that the efforts of my parents won't go in vain. But they send their own kids abroad to study. The economy is horrible and then they ask why the Turkish youth does not want to stay in their country - why would they? Why would they want to stay here? You know why we don't want to stay here? Because there is no social freedom. The economy is zero, the youth are not given any value.”*

A few minutes further in the video, a middle-aged woman and her teenage daughter join the conversation. The middle-aged woman says that she had to take her daughter off school because they could not afford to send her to school. The girl says: (9:33) *“I am doing nothing but work. I will remain uneducated, it is finished. There won't be anything else in my life.”*

Further in the video, the reporter asks another youth whether as a student she has dreams. The girl replies: (24:17) *“Yes, of course I have. I want to go to where my future will be good. I want to go abroad because the life standards there are high. Purchasing power is high.”*

SI.3 Istanbul, Esenler. 30.12.2021

The reporter asks a man walking on the shopping street with his wife and children. His early adolescent son steps forward and makes a quick account of the main price hikes that have happened in the last weeks, saying that these prices render the increase in the minimum wage meaningless. The reporter asks him if as a young person he has anxiety for the future. He replies: (00:38) *“If as a 12-13-year old person I am following the affairs of this country then this country is sunk. This country is finished.”*

SI.4 Istanbul, Bağcılar. 30.12.2021

The reporter stops two young people, a girl and a boy. The girl has short red hair and she looks dressed-up, just like her companion who is wearing skinny jeans and a hoodie. The

reporter asks the girl whether they are content with the economy. She says that the economy is horrible and that they are going around with 5 TL in their pocket. When the reporter asks who is responsible, she gives the name of the president. The reporter asks her whether as a young person she has anxiety for the future. She replies: (00:47) *“Of course. Very much. Like I cannot go to school, I quit school. I am going to an education center, like I am working and studying at the same time, I am going to school once a day. The economy is so bad.”* The reporter asks if she knows who she would vote for in the coming elections. (01:02) *“I don’t know but it is just certain that I won’t vote for Recep Tayyip. Certain. Certain. He made the country bankrupt. The country is gone, it sunk.”* She looks around and asks: “Is there anybody who is happy here right now?” They cannot afford to buy cooking oil. Her mother has bought her brother cooking oil as a wedding gift. A man who stands by asks her how much money the boy has in her pocket to which she replies: *“5 TL. We cannot eat. We are hungry.”* After these comments some women passing start saying things to her. They are making comments about the way she is dressed. The women who are making the comments are wearing headscarves and long jackets. She has her clothes must be cheaper than theirs, One of the women says to the microphone: (03:07) *“Sorry but it doesn’t seem to be so. You are not an ordinary citizen like us. ... We are always by the side of our government. Those who don’t like this government should go live where they like.”* The young girl shouts: *“I will go. Can I go though? Do I have the chance to go? Give me a passport, give me money, give me a document with which I will be able to go and I will go.”* The red-haired girl leaves the spot soon after. She tells the others that she is a high school student and she has to work to support herself and her family. Some voices come up in her support. A middle-aged man challenges her declarations, making more comments about her clothes and questioning her morals. Her companion drags the girl away from the scene.

SI. 5 Istanbul, Pendik, 13.12.2021

The reporter starts talking with two young women who tell him about their lack of hope about the country. Both of the women express that they have felt the need to change their future plans recently. One of them says that she used to want to study law, but since a law

degree in Turkey doesn't have any practical validity abroad she has to choose another profession. In any case, it is difficult to study, they say, the textbooks are very expensive. A young man joins the scene and says: (10:07) *“People from our own nation suffer unemployment so that Syrians can take their jobs for less money and then go to the seaside to smoke their shisha. Why? We are unemployed. If refugees are so good then why didn't you give jobs to those people who were selling watches on the street, who were here before them? (refers to the immigrants from African countries who often got by in Turkey by selling watches on the street) They didn't do anything wrong. Right now Syrians are being employed very often and Turkish people are starving as they are searching for jobs. It's my last year in the university. I don't know where I can find a job once I graduate. My only dream right now is to go abroad and at least earn the money to be able to look after myself and to support my family. I don't have any plans for my future. I cannot think about my tomorrow right now. I can only think of surviving today. And I am sure I am not alone, I am sure 99% of the crowd here are like me. I don't want to say who the 1% are because they might come to my house (to arrest me) after this interview.”*

6. Conclusion

Young people as they narrate their future expectations are always already to give references to discourses available in the public sphere. Depending on where they are, what is acceptable to say, what is politically correct or what needs to be proffered, will change. The interviews that were conducted for this research did not make a lot of space for discussions on politics. They talked of identities and singularities, in a peaceful situation where the respondents expressed themselves safely, in an ethical and scientifically geared setting. The narratives that come out of street interviews are of a different kind. The street interviews are declarations and encounters that take place in a very restricted and surveilled public sphere. In street interviews, people's political allegiances are often just assumed depending on how they look or on a few words taken out of context. This harshness reduces the need for being correct or considerate. The difference in tone between the two sets of data can be attributable to this, if not to a bias in the primary data set.

Often when they talk about their future expectations, the youth in Turkey refers to the prospect of leaving the country. This early finding during the process of data collection was influential in diverting the course of the project towards a study of future narratives of youth in Turkey. The results of the study have served to shed some light on this pattern. Quantitative studies reveal that there is a general increase in the number of youth in Turkey who want to leave their countries and settle in another country. The 1999 research by the Istanbul Center for Social Research found that the desire to leave the country and to go live abroad is more prominent in the group of individuals between 15-20 years of age, students and singles, with 40.7% of the youth wanting to leave the country. (Center for Social Research, 1999, p. 113) Those who had higher hopes about the future - such as having a good job and having a life of material comfort in the future - wanted more often to move abroad than those who were pessimistic about these prospects. (ibid., p. 113) This finding resonates with the assessment of Murray et al., 1983 - that youth with aspirations leave their communities more often than the others.

A survey carried out in 2020 by MAK Consultancy in MAK Danışmanlık finds that youth definitely want to temporarily live abroad if they are given the chance %76. %14

replied that they would like to go but they wouldn't go if they had the same conditions in their own country. %64 replied “definitely yes” to the question “would you leave your country and go live somewhere else permanently if you had the chance”. Only % 14 replied “no” to this question and 22% declared themselves undecided. Among those who replied “yes definitely” to his question, %59 replied that they would go “for a better future”. (Yeditepe & MAK, 2020, p. 103)

The 1999 research by the Center has found out that the youth that declared wanting to live in another country abroad, mentioned as present problems in the society that they face the most, a lack of respect for the youth, the pressures that they face in social settings, and problems related with sexuality. (Center for Social Research, 1999, p. 113) The findings of our research demonstrate that economic, social, political and ethical concerns intertwine and link to the theme of leaving the country in various ways.

The theme of leaving the country is a central theme that explains the data set. Young people in Turkey want to leave their country because this is a way out of the very complicated set of problems that Turkey presents them with. Some people trade the future with today, by leaving school to work or by giving up their retirement. For young women, economical concerns may or may not be related to concerns about their well-being, but in their daily lives they find these two concerns side by side. A lack of freedom in the present and a lack of opportunities for changing one's life, create despair. Also, young people who are not happy with what they have are practically asked to leave. The casual way in which a middle-aged woman tells a young girl to leave her country, (SI.4) is not a singular event. This call to leave should be understood as part of a series of discourses by Turkey's dominant groups towards dissident groups, asking them to leave with their free will. Young people are pushed to leave because in their country there is no space for them, especially if they have a secular lifestyle that seeks the satisfaction of what is seen as modern-western values. The anti-communist slogan “Communists to Moscow” and the secularist slogan in the 90's against conservatives “Off to Arabia!” has now transformed into another call, though this time with an undefined direction.

The youth cannot really go, because they don't have the capacity. The capacity to leave has to do with the possession of two things: some money, and the necessary papers that will allow one to leave and travel to another country. The lira losing its value makes life in other

countries more attractive all the while as they render it unreachable. It is not easy to obtain the legal documents for traveling out of Turkey towards any OSCE country, as these countries require visa procedures from Turkish nationals, in which their socioeconomic status is carefully monitored for possible immigrants to be denied entry. These legal and economic exigencies create a sense of obstacle. This obstacle, behind which a much more comfortable life is supposed to be, possibly contributes to the active desire that many young people show towards the option of leaving the country.

Social pressures and violence come up often in young people's future narratives, but this theme is clearly less prevalent in the discourses of men. This can be because women and other genders are more frequently targeted by these pressures, and because they perceive the added risk of gender-based violence. This point presents a case for future research. Young individuals also express that they are not free, and that they don't have a strong feeling of security. The crisis in Turkey is often discussed in relation to the economic limitations. But these other aspects of despair should also be taken into consideration. The concern about refugees and the outright anti-refugee discourse was present in the second set of data, but absent in the first one. If this is not because of a bias in the data set, then it can be inferred that anti-refugee discourse is an element in public discussions that come up more often in moments of resentment or rage, which was not experienced during the one-on-one interviews but are expressed and performed during street interviews. The prevalence of worries about violence and repression, and the street interviews themselves turning into performances of these patterns, is a point that needs to be considered.

Duty and obligation can in a superficial look seem to be a theme that comes up in more conservative narratives, but traces of the theme can be found in other narratives too. Unsurprisingly by now in this research, this theme also comes up in relation to the theme of leaving the country, but also in discourses related to economic hardships. People feel a sense of duty towards those that they perceive as their community - be it a family, an association, or a sociocultural group. These bonds have been mentioned as bearers of hope in other parts of the data set.

The effects of a crisis are often discussed in economic terms and even when social aspects are discussed it is difficult to get beyond numbers. It is evident that in current Turkey, the Turkey of the late-Erdogan era, some mechanisms are at work that are making people

lose hope. People find hope because they believe in the future, but they have to rewire and recode their worlds while trying to get through a situation of unending impasse. They have to get rid of burdens so that they can go on with their lives, in a world where they are offered ever-shrinking visions and capabilities. What residue is this continuous emergency situation and our reactions to it, leaving on our skin? These are points for further research not only in the context of Turkey, but for many other places where people are suffering impasses.

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Videos

SI.1 Medyali TV, 19.12.2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcJQtKREVsM>

SI.2 Medyali TV, 28.12.2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jw2vhbMZC6Y>

SI.3 Kanal Dünya, 30.12.2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdQgiovCNLc>

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