

TESEV Good Governance Reports  
**Women in Municipalities,  
Municipality for Women**

Ulař Bayraktar



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Municipality for Women

# Women in Municipalities, Municipality for Women

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# Preface

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Empowerment of women in Turkey cannot be considered without mechanisms and procedures such as transparency, accountability, and participation, notions implied by the concept of governance. Similarly, the offered solutions to overcome the deadlocks in local governance must be gender-sensitive. Whereas the wide range projects conducted by the public sector, civil society and academy provided insights on the obstacles to empowerment of women, they also identified spaces of opportunity. Hence, increasing the representation of women in local governance emerges as one of the priority areas waiting for a solution. Notwithstanding regulatory reforms such as positive discrimination or quota are not sufficient to increase the representation of women. On the other hand, in order to better comprehend the reasons behind the low ratio of women representation, examination of sociological causes is essential. Moreover, building a direct correlation between enhancing representation of women and social services for women is not always possible. Both gender roles and governance processes need to be analyzed together to understand this relationship.

The project, “Empowerment of Women in Local Governance” conducted by TESEV in partnership with the Swedish Consulate General in İstanbul explores the relation between women representation and services provided for women in all metropolitan municipalities in Turkey. Furthermore, the quality of representation and services are examined in terms of gender awareness. While research findings identify the problems regarding gender awareness, they aim to provide concrete policy recommendations for future implementations.

We would like to thank our author, Ulaş Bayraktar, our project consultant Esra Kaya Erdoğan, Necati Binici the President of Union of Citizen Assemblies of Turkey for their invaluable contributions to this research and Bedirhan Erdem Mutlu for his selfless work, Aydın, Gaziantep, İstanbul, Konya and Ordu Municipalities and our interviewees from metropolitan councils, municipality staff, citizen assembly and NGOs for their candid support and cooperation.

**TESEV**



# Executive Summary

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In 2014 local elections, only three women (Özlem Çercioğlu, Gültan Kışanak, and Fatma Şahin) have been elected as mayor of metropolitan municipalities (Aydın, Diyarbakır and Gaziantep) and the rate of women in the metropolitan municipality councils remained around 10%. These rates do not differ significantly from the previous years. While increasing representation of women requires more than enhanced regulations, its influence on services for women also needs to be examined. TESEV, in partnership with Swedish Consulate General in İstanbul, explores the impact of women representation on quality and quantity of services provided by local governments for women. This report examines women representation in 30 metropolitan municipalities. Based on geography and political party diversity, the study reduces them into 11 cities. Lack of data in cities with appointed trustees due to current state of emergency made it impossible to include those cities in the study. The field research has been conducted in five cities namely Aydın, Gaziantep, İstanbul, Konya and Ordu with women metropolitan council members, bureaucrats, women NGOs and members of citizen assemblies. A roundtable has been held in Gaziantep with related participants from the metropolitan municipality, citizen assembly and NGOs. Research findings are shared with the public in a panel in İstanbul.

This report argues for the necessity to explore the masculinity of the politics and creating alternative political areas. Hence, it recommends three new approaches to empower women in local governance:

1. Production of ethnographic studies enriched with visual material such as documentaries, photographs and comics and preparation of gender awareness trainings for the elected council members and bureaucrats;
2. Advancing the partnership of new alternative political platforms such as woman cooperatives and the local governments and increasing the collaboration between public and civil society;
3. Publishing the biographies and stories of successful women from different parts of the world to increase the transmission of experiences in between women, especially regarding overcoming social and financial obstacles to active participation in international processes.



# Women in Municipalities, Municipality for Women

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Women are underrepresented in local governments in Turkey. Despite the efforts of women's rights organizations and political parties, the fact that less than 3% of all mayors and only around 10% of members of metropolitan councils are women shows that the rate of women's representation in local governing bodies is very limited. It is assumed that strengthening women's representation in metropolitan councils and among high-ranking municipality bureaucrats and the active participation of women in city governments would play an important role in improving services such as infrastructure, childcare, and care of the elderly provided by the local governments and would strengthen the economic and social participation of women at local level. Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) conducted the "Empowerment of Women in Local Governances" project in partnership with the Consulate General of Sweden. In order to bring a new approach to the existing literature, this project examines the impact of women's representation on the quality and quantity of services provided for women and recommends policies for empowerment of women in local governance.

In the first phase of this project, women's representation in 30 metropolitan municipalities are thoroughly examined, and 11 cities are selected for further study based on geographical distribution and distribution of political parties. Activity Reports, Strategic Plans and decisions of the metropolitan council published since the local elections of 2014 are examined to provide a detailed breakdown of both representation of women and services provided for women. After this desktop research, a field study is conducted in five cities based on women's representation, geographical distribution and the distribution of political parties; namely Aydın, Gaziantep, İstanbul, Konya and Ordu. Women metropolitan council members, bureaucrats, NGOs and citizen assemblies that carry out assistance for women are interviewed. The first findings of the project were discussed in a round-table meeting with the participation of local stakeholders in Gaziantep. This report aims to break down the obstacles to participation of women in local governments and the impact of their representation on services by conveying discussions held in these five metropolitan cities.

Table 1. Evaluation of Women's Representation in Metropolitan Municipalities between 2014 and 2017

Party	Ankara	Aydın	Gaziantep	İstanbul	İzmir	Konya	Malatya	Mersin	Muğla	Ordu	Şanlıurfa
Mayor	AKP	CHP	AKP	AKP	CHP	AKP	AKP	MHP	CHP	AKP	AKP
Number of metropolitan council members	Melih Gökçek	Özlem Çerçioğlu	Fatma Şahin	Kadir Topbaş	Aziz Kocaoğlu	Tahir Akyürek	Ahmet Çakır	Burhanettin Kocamaz	Dr. Osman Gürün	Enver Yılmaz	Nihat Çiftçi
Number of female members	139	80	53	320	175	131	50	78	68	75	83
Percentage	10.1%	6.3%	5.7%	15%	15.4%	4.6%	4%	6.4%	0%	2.7%	12%
Total number of heads of department	27	25	24	24	31	22	19	25	16	15	16
Number of female heads of department	5	4	6	2	12	0	0	3	2	1	0
Percentage	19%	16%	25%	8.33%	39%	0%	0%	12%	13%	6.25%	0%
Total number of division managers	113	88	92	94	160	94	65	118	61	49	60
Number of female division managers	8	13	-	8	60	-	2	26	15	1	3
Percentage	7.1%	14.8%	-	8.5%	37.5%	-	3.1%	22%	24.6%	2%	5%
Total number of employees	4,073	1,016	891	14,256	4,882	5,744	2,690	2,147	2,846	1,954	1,075
Number of female employees	875	159	-	-	1252	452	-	443	417	286	37
Percentage	21.48%	15.65%	-	-	25.65%	7.87%	-	21%	14.65%	14.64%	3%
Council commission related to women	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓
Name of the commission	Equal Opportunity for Men & Women	Women, Children & Family	-	Women, Family and Children	Equal Opportunity for Men & Women	Women & Family Support	-	Equal Opportunity for Men & Women	-	Equal Opportunity for Men & Women	Equal Opportunity for Men & Women and Family
Citizen assembly	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Citizen assembly women commission	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓

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There have been many important studies carried out both at international and local levels to evaluate municipal services provided for women and to raise the quality of these services. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) defined under the leadership of the UNDP in 2015, is one of the most prominent works in this field considering its scope and the fact that 193 countries have adopted the strategy. SDGs define 17 prerequisites required for ending poverty in the world and to ensure peace and prosperity for societies. Their agendas are closely being followed in TESEV's all research areas. Furthermore, *achieving gender equality* is one of these goals. The Empowerment of Women in Local Governance project is built on this goal and aims to support SDG 5 with local indicators.

In order to discover the existing problem areas, related literature and previous project implementations are studied. Among them, the project Women Friendly Cities United Nations Joint Program (WFCUNJP)<sup>1</sup> with its implementation in 12 cities stands out. This program, which was initiated in 2006, defines women-friendly cities as those where 'all the residents, women or men alike, participate in all areas of urban life on an equal basis'. The Women Friendly Cities program aims to integrate gender equality in local governments with Local Equality Action Plans (LEAP), and to realize this it foresees setting up Men and Women Equality Commissions in pilot provinces to carry out works that inform society. Although Women Friendly Cities is one of the pioneer projects in this field, with its fresh perspective and experience, we see there are limits to its sustainability. While municipalities' activities for women within the framework of the WFCUNJP project have been evaluated, these services have not been limited to services provided directly to women. Instead, it projected to measure gender sensitivity of a wide range of services provided by metropolitan municipalities from transport to health and from social services to employment opportunities. This holistic framework created for this purpose is important to understanding all dimensions of this issue.

The Turkish-Swedish Partnership for Local Governance<sup>2</sup> (TUSELOG) is another project initiated with the purpose of empowering women's prominence in municipalities. The Turkish-Swedish Gender Equality Network of TUSELOG, which has been implemented in three municipalities, aims to increase the awareness and capacities of local governments to offer equal services to women and men. For instance, the Commission of Equal Opportunity for Men and Women set up in Ordu Metropolitan Municipality within this partnership is still active as a positive consequence of this project. In addition to this, TUSELOG has provided trainings on 'ensuring equal opportunities for women and men' to selected municipality employees within the framework of its partnerships with municipalities. However, in order to increase the number of studies such as Women Friendly Cities and TUSELOG and ensure their continuity, these efforts should transform into policies adopted by political and local actors.

Similarly, another study that discusses the policies and budgets of municipalities with respect to gender is the "Cities without Women"<sup>3</sup> project. The Cities without Women advocates the idea that public policies would eliminate inequalities if they could be designed in a gender-sensitive manner and underlines the importance of the number of studies on this issue. In parallel with the recommendation of TESEV's pioneer Gender Equality in Local Governments and Budgeting Manual<sup>4</sup>, this project examines the gender-sensitive budgeting approaches of the municipalities visited. Cities without Women project, which was initiated by five female social scientists,

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1 <http://www.kadinstokentler.com/>, last access: 31/07/2017, 14:39

2 <http://projects.sklinternational.se/tuselogs/>, last access: 31/07/2017, 15:00

3 Günlük-Şenesen, Gülay. Yücel, Yelda. Yakar Önal, Ayşegül. Ergüneş, Nuray and Yakut Çakar, Burcu (2017). Kadınsız Kentler Toplumsal Cinsiyet Açısından Belediyelerin Politika ve Bütçeleri (Cities without Woman – Policies and Budgets of Municipalities with respect to Social Gender. İstanbul Bilgi University Publication: İstanbul.

4 Klatzer, Dr Elizabeth (2012), Yerel Yönetimlerden Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği ve Bütçeleme Kılavuzu (Social Gender Equality in Local Governments and Budgeting Manual), TESEV Yayınları (TESEV Publications): İstanbul.

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emphasizes that the social and political structures are crucial in sustaining well-being of women. Moreover, they criticize that despite the reforms made over the past decade, local decisions are still made in a centralized manner in Turkey.

In the studies undertaken so far, empowerment of women's presence in local governance has been analyzed with interrelated variables such as representation, participation in the decision-making process, gender-sensitive budgeting, and improvement of gender sensitivity of municipality services. "Empowering Women in Local Governance" project aims to contribute to this field both by following up the local situation regarding these variables and by studying the complex relationship between these services. Since the differences between these 5 cities are not significant regarding the main research questions raised, it can be said that a masculine politics is dominant both in national politics and in local governments. Therefore, it seems that women either can't make their presence felt in politics or can have a voice only by adopting masculine behavior and relationship patterns. In order to discuss these characteristics of local politics, we haven't analyzed the fieldwork findings comparatively by cities but divided them into groups by the themes under examination. Notably, it was not possible to compare the governance equilibriums of a city in the size of İstanbul with city the size of Ordu<sup>5</sup>. We have emphasized any positive and negative aspects specific to those cities hoping they cast a light on future studies.

In this report, we first attempt to understand the presence and decision making capacities of women in the administrative levels of these five cities. Next, we will convey our observations about how these situations are perceived and explained, and then introduce a discussion on what kind of municipal services are provided to women. In the final section we will offer our three-pillar policy recommendation for empowering women in political, social and economic fields.

Countless studies that have been undertaken in this field show that empowerment of women in local governance cannot be considered independently of their position in politics, employment and family. Since empowerment of women is an issue intertwined with many social and institutional problems and requires strong structural reforms, it would not be fair to expect a complete study of women in local governance. However, we hope that this report adopts a relatively different approach for the solution of this problem while picturing the current situation with comprehensive data collected via field and desktop research.

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5 According to the latest official records of Turkish Statistical Institute, İstanbul, the largest city in Turkey has a population of 14,804,116; whereas Ordu's population is composed of 750,588 people.

# Representation of Women in Local Governments

It is easy to see the presence and impact of women in local governments by looking at certain statistics: the number of women in elected and appointed positions will help us to provide a clear answer to this question.

If we start from metropolitan city mayors, we know that only three of these mayors are women (Aydın, Diyarbakır and Gaziantep), in whole Turkey.

According to the statistics published by the General Directorate of Local Administrations (Table 2), the percentage of female mayors throughout the country, including all the municipalities together, is only 2.86%. When we look at the metropolitan city mayors, we see that Fatma Şahin from AK Parti was elected in Gaziantep, Gültan Kışanak from BDP in Diyarbakır and Özlem Çerçioğlu from CHP in Aydın whereas in non-metropolitan cities, there is only one female mayor in the provincial municipality of Hakkari. As far as we know, there are no international statistics on this matter<sup>6</sup>. According to a report about female mayors published in October 2016 in the newspaper the *Guardian*, 19% of the mayors of large cities in the USA and nine of the 59 participants (15%) of the Global Mayors Parliament are women<sup>7</sup>. When we look at Europe, we see that cities such as Paris, Rome, Barcelona, Madrid, Prague and Sofia are led by female mayors<sup>8</sup>.

	Total	Women	Percentage (%)
Total number of all mayors <sup>10</sup>	1,398	40	2.9%
Metropolitan mayors	30	3	10%
Provincial mayors	51	1	2%
District mayors	919	33	3.6%
Town mayors	398	3	0.75%
Council members	20,498	2,198	10.7%

6 The annual Global Gender Gap reports published by the World Economic Forum provides the number of deputies and ministers but includes no data on mayors. See <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/infographics/>, last access: 24/07/2017, 13:00)

7 <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/oct/12/global-rise-female-mayors>, last access: 17/07/2017, 13:15)

8 <https://inews.co.uk/essentials/news/world/meet-new-female-mayors-europes-major-cities/>, last access: 17/07/2017. Let us also note that, outside of Europe, the mayors of Cape Town (South Africa), Las Vegas (USA), Nouakchott (Mauritania), Tokyo (Japan), Surabaya (Indonesia), Bagdat (Iraq), Lima (Peru) and Sydney (Australia) are also women.

9 [http://www.migm.gov.tr/kurumlar/migm.gov.tr/BELEDİYELELER/2014\\_yili\\_mahalli\\_idarelerin\\_cinsiyet\\_dagilimi.pdf](http://www.migm.gov.tr/kurumlar/migm.gov.tr/BELEDİYELELER/2014_yili_mahalli_idarelerin_cinsiyet_dagilimi.pdf), last access: 17/07/2017, 12:11).

10 Total number of metropolitan, city, district and town mayors (<https://www.eicisleri.gov.tr/Anasayfa/MulkiIdariBolumleri.aspx>, last access: 2/08/2017, 15:00).

When we look at the numbers, a significant increase in the number of elected female council member is observed. Although the national average is above 10%, when we look at the rates of cities where we have undertaken our fieldwork we notice that this rate exceeds 10% only in İstanbul (Table 3). Even in Gaziantep and Aydın where the mayors are women, female council members number only about five to six per cent<sup>11</sup>. If we remember the fact that metropolitan mayors are very influential on the election of council members<sup>12</sup>, we can argue that female mayors can't be insistent or efficient about the presence of female members in metropolitan councils. Since the metropolitan council members are not elected directly, this observation needed to be checked at district level. However, we do not see any significant change here, except in Aydın and Ordu. From this difference between district city councils and metropolitan municipal councils, we can deduce that women candidates are ranked lower.

**Table 3. Numbers and Percentages of Female City Council Members**

	Aydın <sup>13</sup>	Gaziantep <sup>14</sup>	İstanbul	Konya	Ordu
Percentage of female metropolitan council members	6.3%	5.7%	15%	4.6%	2.7%
Percentage of female district council members	11.19%	5%	16.62%	4.17%	4.1%

Although the limited representation of women in metropolitan councils requires further research, it has frequently been stated during our interviews that this problem begins early in the process of candidate nominations. Metropolitan council members we interviewed complained that male and female candidates are evaluated using different criteria during the preparation of the list of candidates for municipal councils. For example, they complained about the fact that the nomination criteria for women are much stricter than the criteria applied to male candidates; whereas women are asked if they have a bachelor's degree, what their professional experience is and how many published articles they have etc., there wasn't even a diploma requirement for male candidates. A council member we interviewed in İstanbul stated that she believes these questions are made to smooth the way for men. Another council member in İstanbul pointed out that there are few female council members other than the ones that are directly nominated by the leader of the party, despite the discourse that there ought to be more female candidates in the party.

A metropolitan council member in İstanbul told us that the insufficient presence of women in politics could be the result of the issues prioritized by municipalities. She stated that the main agenda of municipal councils are land development and legal issues. Thus, female-related problems are seen as secondary, which could have an influence on the low number of female administrators and politicians. According to her, one of the disadvantages of women in politics is the presence of efficient male networks. For example, a member of İstanbul municipal

<sup>11</sup> The probable cause for this difference between the national average and our sample is the fact that we could not include HDP and BDP municipalities in our sample because of the state of emergency in place during the period of our study. On the other hand, we should admit that the municipalities in South-Eastern Anatolia increased the statistics on women representation thanks to both co-chairmanship practices and the high number of female council members.

<sup>12</sup> See Bayraktar, U (2017), *Kentin Annelerinden Babalarına: Beledi Siyasetin Başkanlık Rejimine Evrimi (From the Mothers of the City to its Fathers: Evolution of the Municipal Politics to the Presidential Regime)* KÜYEREL, n.1, pp.89--122.

<sup>13</sup> Female mayor.

<sup>14</sup> Female mayor.

council says that ‘There are more people from Sivas in İstanbul than the actual population in Sivas’. She believes that their organizations support men above women, hence gender discrimination outside the politics indirectly serves the masculine structure of politics.

Beside the number of female members in municipal councils, the presence of women in the organizational structure and agenda of those councils are other variables to take into consideration. In four of the five cities where the fieldwork was conducted, we see a council commission for women (Table 3). However, the fact that the emphasis of these four commissions is family and children (except the Men- Women Equality Commission in Ordu) leads us to think that women are not considered as individuals but rather as a mother. A council member we interviewed stated that she had proposed the name of the commission to be Equality Unit but instead it was named Family and Children Commission. Another council member we interviewed, again in İstanbul, said that the naming was wrong and that works in council are quite limited and not much related to women.

	<b>Aydın</b>	<b>Gaziantep</b>	<b>İstanbul</b>	<b>Konya</b>	<b>Ordu</b>
<b>Women-related metropolitan council commission/ if not available, municipality unit</b>	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
<b>Name of the commission/ unit</b>	<b>Woman, Child and Family Commission</b>	<b>Unit for Men- Women Equality</b>	<b>Woman, Family and Child Commission</b>	<b>Woman and Family Support Services Commission</b>	<b>Commission for Equal Opportunity for Men and Women</b>
<b>Citizen assembly</b>	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
<b>Citizen assembly women council</b>	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓

Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, which hasn’t set up a women’s commission, carries out activities for women with its Men-Women Equality Unit. We need to emphasize that the cities that set up a citizen assembly and a women’s council as part of the citizen assembly are Ordu and Gaziantep, both of which manage the issue around the equality of woman and man.

Although the existence of commissions and units shows the presence of an interest and concern at a nominal level, the essential point to be considered is how these mechanisms actually function. Indeed, metropolitan council member in İstanbul indicated that none of the issues dealt by the commission is directly related to woman. She states that issues related to elderly care are brought to the attention of the commission solely in order that the commission gives the impression of working efficiently. She added that a similar commission in the district where she is a council member never gathered at all. She thinks that the reason for this is that women’s issues are seen as secondary on the city’s agenda. Another metropolitan council member in İstanbul believes that women are not taken into consideration when making decisions and that the issues are not approached from the point of view of woman. According to her, even women who have the power to make decisions don’t fulfill these responsibilities under equal conditions because when a woman makes a decision, that decision is questioned more than it would be if a man had made it.

Table 5. Female Heads of Departments and Division Managers					
	Aydın	Gaziantep	İstanbul	Konya	Ordu
Total number of heads of departments	25	24	24	22	15
Number of female heads of departments	4	6	2	0	1
Percentage of female heads of departments	16%	25%	8.3%	0	6.3%
Total number of division managers	88	92	94	94	49
Number of female division managers	13	9	8	N/A	1
Percentage of female division managers	14.8%	9.8%	8.5%	N/A	2%
Total number of employees of the municipality	1,016	891	14,256	5,744	1,954
Number of female employees of the municipality	159	N/A	N/A	452	286
Percentage of the female employees to total number of employees	15.6%	N/A	N/A	7.9%	14.6%

Outside the elected positions, when we study the presence of women in administrative jobs we see that the rate of women in administration is similar to the rate of female politicians. According to the data we obtained, we can only provide the numbers of female employees in Ordu and Konya Metropolitan Municipalities. This rate is 14% in Ordu and 7.9% in Konya. As far as the heads of departments and division managers are concerned, the cities where the mayor is a woman stand out. Gaziantep, where one fourth of the department heads are women and Aydın, where four of the 25 heads of department (16%) are women are the most prominent examples. The fact that six heads of department are women in Gaziantep creates the impression that women are given more power in the municipality's decision-making process. A Gaziantep metropolitan council member we interviewed thinks that Mayor Fatma Şahin supports women in all matters and therefore women can be effective in the municipality. A member of Gaziantep metropolitan council who thinks that women's presence in division managements, important positions within the municipality and department management facilitates their work, emphasizing that they can establish close relationships with women while they couldn't do that so easily with men to whom they can't explain their problems. On the other hand, a bureaucrat we interviewed in İstanbul stated that, even though the number of women in top management is limited, some bureaucrats who manage large number of people could be more efficient than we are led to believe. On the other hand, she added that the rate of women among the staff she manages do not reach 10%, although a significant group of female executives was trained. Indeed, another bureaucrat we interviewed pointed out that she is the only female manager working with 30 male bureaucrats and she confirmed that the number of female managers and employees is limited.

We can see that the representation of women at lower management levels is also relatively high in cities where the mayor is a woman. Indeed, when we look at division managers, we see the highest rate in Aydın with 14.8%. Aydın, where 14 of 88 division managers are women, is followed by Gaziantep where nine of the 92 managers (10%) are women.



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When we look at the extent to which women's issues are on the agenda in decision-making, methodology and processes apart from the decision-making actors and when we ask, for example, if there is<sup>15</sup> a gender-sensitive budget implementation, we learn that among the cities where we carried out the site study, only in Gaziantep has there been such an effort. There has not been such an initiative in İstanbul, however a bureaucrat that we interviewed thinks this is not necessary because the budget assigned to female-centered facilities is bigger than required thanks to the importance attached by the mayor to women and children. On the other hand, another bureaucrat of the same institution stated that when we consider the fact that the share of health and social services is merely 2%, the budget allocated for women can't be so large. As we see here, the low gender sensitive budget awareness results in the failure to define a budget for women when planning municipality budgets and to understanding which services are planned directly or indirectly for women.

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<sup>15</sup> According to the European Council, a gender-sensitive budget is the application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. This means the gender-based assessment of budgets incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality (cited by Günlük Şenesen and colleagues. 2017: 6).

# Gender Awareness

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We have mentioned so far observations about how women are generally underrepresented in politics, however a very interesting statement voiced quite frequently during the interviews was that there isn't in fact any such issue.

These interviewees stated that the representation of women in local governments isn't a problem, women are indeed represented in the decision-making processes of municipalities, women do not experience discrimination, no request from a female council member remained unanswered and indeed, there are many women on management boards. Despite the increase in the number of female employees in municipalities, these women work mostly in low-level jobs and they believe this is due to their lack of experience. When these women are asked about the influence of women on decisions, they say that municipalities are not obliged to take opinions for each decision. Spaces like the ladies-only gathering places<sup>16</sup> can be seen as an indicator of how women have been served more than men, and we heard some interviewees complaining about how even the desks of the male managers could only be purchased by consulting women.

We observe that lack of gender awareness is in a way used to rationalize some problems experienced, particularly in politics. The opinion that our society is matriarchal – as we hear from time to time – is accompanied with the idea that women do not experience any problems in relation to gender equality. For example, a bureaucrat we interviewed in Konya stated that the place of women in Turkish society does not constitute a problem, as he believes we are a matriarchal society and a woman keeping the family budget is evidence of this fact.

Other metropolitan council members we interviewed stated that their cities have overcome the problems of gender equality and that they even have a women's football team in their city. On the other hand, in Ordu, they implicitly accepted that women are underrepresented and their services for women are inadequate by pointing out that councils should prioritize infrastructural problems rather than women's issue since Ordu has recently become a metropolitan municipality and the previous mayor was from the opposition party.

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16 "Hanımlar Lokali" is translated as "ladies-only gathering place".

# The Ground of Social Inequality Seen as “Natural”

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Besides the opinions that deny the inadequate representation of women and their insufficient presence in management positions, we have also frequently encountered opinions that indirectly or openly associate this situation to ontological differences between genders.

We have frequently heard a kind of admiration of women’s work may be seen as statements that implicitly support the argument of ontological differences between men and women. In this sense, the idea that women are different from men by their nature paves the way for discriminatory practices that can be rationalized later by this supposed difference.

For example, stating that women are different from men by their nature; women have a higher emotional intelligence; and by emphasizing the fact that women can see details that men can’t see and that they are detail-oriented; that this difference was confirmed by scientists; that women and men work differently; and that they have a different point of view is another mechanism that rationalizes social inequality.

A bureaucrat we interviewed in İstanbul thinks she was hired because the organization couldn’t find a woman for fieldwork. She attributed the reluctance of women for fieldwork to a natural characteristic associated to childcare and has the idea that this was the dominant female profile by saying ‘you’re running away if you’re lazy.’ By saying this, she meant that the disconnection of women from the social and corporate world is due to their upbringing. She thinks that women are also responsible for their inability to exist with their own characters because many of them preferred to be protected by others, for example in headscarf discussions, she states that her friends requested to be separated from the crowd and that they choose to delay their own personalities.

According to another metropolitan council member in İstanbul, the way women are brought up creates a self-confidence problem no matter how skillful or educated they are. She observed that women are able to express themselves perfectly well in audiences where the majority is female. However, they waver in audiences that also include male participants, even if the subject is their area of expertise. Moreover, a bureaucrat we interviewed in Ordu pointed out that women who suffer from a fear they wouldn’t succeed, remain timid.

Another metropolitan council member we interviewed in İstanbul pointed out that another weakness of women is their lack of solidarity. She asserted that women, who have the presupposition that they can’t compete with men, not knowing how to support other women and act in solidarity, rather choose to fight with each other. Another council member we interviewed in the same city said that the reason why women are stonewalled in her political party is the fact that women prevent each other. She also stated that when a woman stands out, men try to stop her. Another İstanbul metropolitan council member we interviewed pointed out that men unite to intimidate women who have gained a position in politics, thus even some female metropolitan council members return to their district municipalities.

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It seems that women adopt the behavioral patterns of men due to open and indirect preclusions. For instance, an interviewee who is a member of İstanbul metropolitan council pointed out that women in politics have lost their femininity and gender roles may function in politics independently from sex and those female politicians who don't have a female point of view are no different to men. Indeed in Ordu, we have been told that women need to become mannish or to isolate themselves to stay in politics or they could face serious difficulties.

A bureaucrat we interviewed in Ordu stated that they share the responsibility of women being absent in social life and implied that women are lazy by complaining about the fact that they don't read and that they don't participate in city events even when they are invited. We can't claim that the roles of women in the discrimination they suffer is seen necessarily as negative, because this difference is also associated with the positive characteristics of women. For example, an interviewee in İstanbul thinks that, compared to the rationality of men, women's thought patterns are both more zigzags and more constructive. She believes that women know how to patch clothes while men throw old clothes away and that women would better understand the value of old buildings instead of demolishing them like men. She believes that İstanbul- which is described as a woman in poems- should be managed by women.

Another bureaucrat in İstanbul stated that women's reliability, studiousness and nurturing nature are advantageous and pointed out that women in management are clean and more patient and reconciliatory than men. Furthermore, women are more persuasive because they are able to connect better with people.

We have also been told during field interviews that women are more emotional, clean and hygienic; that they have more developed planning and foresight abilities; that they have a more peaceful but also combative point of view; that they are more studious, compassionate and conscientious; that they have a different imagination and visual perception; and that they are more detail-oriented.

On the other hand, in most of these interviews, it was frequently emphasized that the political scene doesn't help these qualities rise to the surface. For example, an interviewee in Ordu complained about the fact that women don't act like themselves despite all the qualities they enumerated because of the prejudices against them. A council member interviewed in İstanbul thinks that women are required to prove themselves when doing anything: 'Men are not questioned when they propose something, but women are, she added. She thinks that women are asked to justify their proposals in order to have them accepted and that this is due to the difference in their nature. Moreover, a council member in Aydın drew attention to the fact that women have to work twice as hard as men for every position.

This difference of nature has been expressed within the context of some disadvantageous characteristics that attributed to women. For example, a metropolitan council member in İstanbul believes that the impetuosity of women could create a problem and women can make mistakes while acting with their emotions. Another interviewee from İstanbul metropolitan council complained of the fact that she adjusts her stance and rarely objects in order to be seen as one of the women who don't talk or object much. We have also been told that women don't have the ambition required for management positions. In a different context, a member of the İstanbul metropolitan council stated that the quality of women is as important as their quantity and that they need to be influential in politics.

In addition to personal characteristics, everyday life responsibilities socially placed upon women may not be compatible with the functioning of politics. A metropolitan council member told us that her friends from the party poke fun at her by saying that her husband should get a second wife as she can't be at home enough with him. We

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also had some interviewees complaining about the fact that female employees are left behind by male council members who make decisions in cafés or hold meetings during late hours. A member of İstanbul metropolitan council mentioned that male council members used to gather in groups in man-only cafés and make decisions late during the night. She told us that one should be more sensitive to whether everybody has a chance to attend in organizing such meetings. Moreover, she emphasized that when she proposes to hold a meeting during normal business hours between 15:00 and 17:00, that longer duration and later hours are preferred. She also thinks that the fact that there is a barber for men in İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality but that there is no hairdressing salon is a sign of male domination. She added that when she went to the female council members from other parties, they told her that they should ask this to their group; she thinks this shows one more time how this male domination is strong. According to her, the absence of a breastfeeding space is a further proof of this. An interviewee told that when she wanted a breastfeeding room she was told to be silent and what she has asked was scandalous.

# “Positive Discrimination” to Overcome Differences?

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We have seen that interviewees expressed the idea that women have some ontological differences from men that make them advantageous or disadvantageous. When talking about what can be done to help women to be more active in politics by overcoming these differences, the first solution that is brought to the table is to implement positive discrimination in order to beat the disadvantages of women. For example, an interviewee in İstanbul stated that women have acquired important gains since the foundation of the Republic by working very hard. Furthermore, she added that she is against positive discrimination of women although adding herself that her position is owed to the positive discrimination of a man. She stated that women lose their femininity in politics despite being biologically women and therefore she is against discrimination used similarly to quotas. On the other hand, a metropolitan council member in Gaziantep told that a quota is necessary as the attitude of top management on this issue. She complained that outside the metropolitan cities no one is following the quotas already in use and therefore some mandatory arrangements are required. We have also been told that managers who don't respect the one-third quota should be punished with the sanction of dismissal.

Emphasis has been laid on the fact that gender shouldn't have any importance when evaluating candidates for a position; however, this has yet to be understood. Therefore, interviewees told that while a quota is required it isn't acceptable that only gender plays a role during the nomination stage and that candidates should be required to have worked in the relevant field. Most of the interviewees think that a quota is required to increase the number of female members, which is actually very low. Although it is not respected in many places, they said that a one-third quota could ensure a transformative presence.

A metropolitan council member said that although she is against quotas in general she thinks that this application is meaningful in Turkey to increase the number of qualified women in politics. The council members interviewed in Konya think that a quota is necessary to eliminate inequalities that come from the past. A metropolitan council member from İstanbul said that a quota is helpful in order to open the way for women in political parties. A male bureaucrat we interviewed in Aydın states that he supports positive discrimination for women because there are not sufficient women in decision-making positions. He hopes to see the day it will become unnecessary to talk about these issues.

We have also been told that this discrimination shouldn't be limited to political and administrative positions. Indeed, a metropolitan council member we interviewed in İstanbul thinks that working hours should be shorter because of the other responsibilities that women have and that women shouldn't work overtime. Furthermore, a bureaucrat we met in İstanbul emphasized that she tries to employ women as much as possible and that she cares to purchase goods and services sold by women. On the other hand, she mentioned particularly that her advocacy for women's rights is not the result of a feminist approach but of a humanist approach.

We also have encountered interviewees in the field who told us that quotas create a different kind of discrimination. For example, an interviewer emphasized that she finds female quotas unnecessary and even

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humiliating. She stated that this kind of arrangement is contradictory with the equality claim and that women could be uncomfortable with the advantages the organization offers them because of their gender. She thinks that unskilled people are entrusted certain positions only because of their gender. She believes that the importance attached to women and family by the mayor in his understanding of municipal work makes these arrangements unnecessary. Another interviewee stated that she finds it unacceptable that people are appointed, particularly to management positions, solely because they are women, but she accepted that a quota is necessary considering the fact that the female gender is still at a disadvantage in the evaluation of candidates. She thinks that women who don't have a chance or opportunity within the existing landscape and approach would have more courage to find a place in politics if quotas were in place.

# Municipal Services for Women

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Now that we have reviewed the place of women in politics, we can look at the situation of services provided for women within the framework of public policy. When we turn to the services and facilities mentioned in the interviews, we observe that mostly services about the areas of responsibility placed upon them by their gender come into mind under this topic.

The services in Gaziantep such as free nursery places, centers for senior citizens, elderly care centers, active life center, medical home services, family consulting services, etc., can be thought as the manifestation of an approach of seeing women mainly as the family member responsible from children and elderly.

These policies about the family are followed by health services. Services like in-vitro fertilization centers, cancer early diagnosis screening and training centers, and breast-cancer screening, which are not related only to women are also among the services that come to mind when asked about the services for women.

According to Activity Reports, home-based health care, free kindergarten for municipality employees' children, elderly care and facilities aiming to increase employment of women can be listed as the services for women in İstanbul. On the other hand, interestingly, very few activities can be listed in İstanbul. Our interviewees underlined the difficulties in following each and every organization in a city scaled as large as İstanbul. We have been told that three to four activities are organized per year, including the "Stop Violence Against Women"<sup>17</sup> event organized in partnership with the United Nations in the Maiden's Tower. An arrangement was touted that municipality buses drop off women at places that are closer to their home after 10pm<sup>18</sup>. A bureaucrat in İstanbul expressed his discomfort with the fact that women are treated as a creature that needs protection.

In Konya, social places reserved for women draw attention. The ladies-only gathering places, sports center for women, as well as Konya Family Support Center and continuing Education Center (KOMEK) are among the activities listed when people are asked about the services provided for women. When asked if there is a breastfeeding room or nursery in the municipality, they gloss over it by saying that Konya is different from İstanbul and that women in Konya can easily go home and return back to work. Apart from that, a project named "vakıf insan/ wise person" and courses on midwife-pregnant and breast-milk have been organized.

We see places like the ladies-only gathering place and the ladies-only beach reserved for women also in Ordu. Home cleaning services provided for poor families and for the houses of disabled and old people are also listed among services for women. Activities like the No to Violence Against Women Walk and the Women Shelter seem to be aimed at providing an awareness of violence against women.

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17 [https://www.ibb.İstanbul/Uploads/2016/11/kasim2015\\_İstanbul\\_bulteni.y.pdf](https://www.ibb.İstanbul/Uploads/2016/11/kasim2015_İstanbul_bulteni.y.pdf), last access: 15/08/2017, 16:00

18 Hürriyet Newspaper, "Women can drop off wherever they want in İstanbul Buses at Night", <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kadinlar-gece-iett-otobuslerinde-istedikleri-yerde-inecek-40281790>, last access: 15/08/2017, 11:26



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Moreover, the economic power of women tried to be increased through vocational trainings. We were told that they plan activities particularly for poor women who haven't received a good education in Ordu.

When we examine the Activity Reports of Aydin Metropolitan Municipality, sports facilities for women, organizations against domestic violence and incentives given to women entrepreneurs such as flower producers to support the women employment can be listed. On the other hand, in our interviews in Aydin, only the temporary female employment project was recalled as an example of services for women.

During the interviews, we observed that women do not have a place on the agendas of local governments. Even in cities like Gaziantep and Aydin where the mayor is a woman, services focused on women's problems are very limited. Women can only benefit from some assistance within the context of economic problems and family responsibilities. The limited services offered around violence against women consist only of short events and campaigns rather than lasting efforts.

This leads us to think, instead of a will on understanding the causes and foundations of the problem, the women friendly discourse and services for women seem to be only a way of being politically correct. We may think that these woman-centered activities presented as a model serve to worsen the situation rather than provide solutions for women's social problems as they reproduce the gender roles and problems placed upon women. Women that strive to exist as individuals in society and to be appreciated can benefit from certain municipal services and policies only in relation to their children or their relative in need. Hence, this can result in reproducing the traditional status of women through public policies.

Beside the activities that reflect gender, efforts to provide education and economic possibilities to women may be listed among the services to consider. In almost all the interviews, the importance of education was emphasized. Our attention has been drawn to the fact that this education should be provided for both the managers and the inhabitants of a city. Additionally, we were told that decision makers are not qualified and people who get service are uninformed. One suggestion from the field is that language training is very important for women in managerial positions. They believe that, besides increasing formal and non-formal training opportunities, writing courses in organizations like the Lifelong Learning Center of the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul would be meaningful. Women themselves can involuntarily reproduce the idea that women would talk less often as another benefit of courses can be seen as an example of stereotypes around women.

The participants of the round-table meeting in Gaziantep pointed out that women need to be given training to help them become self-sufficient. However, they also underlined that not everyone can be given all types of training and different training opportunities are needed according to socio-economic differences. Gender training and training against child brides for imams are among the training activities mentioned in Gaziantep. On the other hand, we have learned that training is provided in Konya for inhabitants of all ages in every part of the city and around Quran courses. Moreover in Ordu, we see different future training ideas like the "Mother University" project, law, medicine, literacy and equal-opportunity courses.

We see another field of service for women in the form of providing income-generating opportunities. We have been told that the purpose of these services is to support women in their effort to gain independence. A bureaucrat we interviewed stated that it is important to adopt an approach that would generate employment without any political goal or discrimination against women and gave the Parks and Gardens Department of their municipality as an example of this approach. She stated that in this department they employ women who would normally stay at home, that they offer them the opportunity to earn money and provide them with a side income. More

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importantly, according to the same interviewee, thanks to this job, women see other women who have managed to obtain working positions and take these as role models, and this makes them want a more independent life. The vocational and art training courses of Ordu Metropolitan Municipality aim to provide income-generating skills to women. With courses like chocolate making or honey production, they aim to raise the economic level of women. They also stated that they discuss building a handicraft market so that women can sell what they produce themselves.

Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality has bought milking machines for women farmers and they emphasized that they are in touch with female entrepreneurs for other projects.

A crucial issue in these courses is that traditional gender roles for women make it difficult for women to get such training that would provide more independence for them. An interviewee pointed out that if women who want to participate to vocational courses in İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İSMEK) have children, they would need to find a nursery to leave these children in order to be able to attend the courses. Since they would need money to bear the expense of the nursery, we go round in circles: women who don't have a certain income can't participate in the courses intended to provide them income-generating skills, and as such, according to him, only 'women of a certain age, whose children are fully grown or who can leave their children with their mother-in-law' attend the courses of İSMEK and their primary objective is to pass the time of day. This leads us to think that such vocational courses can only be of help to a very limited number of women.

# A New Strategy for Empowering Women in Local Governance

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After the interviews we undertook with tenths of local government actors in five different metropolitan cities, it is clear that we haven't observed any novelty that would surprise anyone in the picture. On the other hand, basic issues persist despite all the civil society projects and social policies around women's issues. For instance, the presence of women in political decision-making and managerial positions is still inadequate. We can assume that no resolute and comprehensive policies are in operation or even on the agenda to improve this situation. What is interesting is that there is a common opinion that this is not needed. If you reject the fact that women are underrepresented and think that there is in fact no inequality, you have no reason to find the lack of such policies odd.

For certain people, the difference that is conceived and presented as inequality is nothing more than a physical, emotional and cognitive difference between women and men. Therefore, the difference between the opportunities and facilities offered in social and political domains to these two sexes who are ontologically different becomes understandable for these people. While this difference is normalized, the requirement to develop policies for this difference is eliminated or a perception that it can be overcome by relevant or non-relevant training is created.

On the other hand, when we think theoretically or on the situation in democratic countries, the presence of women as decision makers, managers and as beneficiaries of policies in local governments in Turkey is severely inadequate. We know that this issue has been on the agenda of the country since 1980 and that all of the political parties and actors have developed discussions and implementations of this issue. On the one hand, arrangements like quotas aim to increase the presence of women in politics, although positive discrimination gives rise to more claims of inequality. The accusation that some women can take office solely due to their sex without their personal background and skills being taken into account can also be an opinion that some women accept allusively from time to time. The fact that the implication that the principle of merit is violated has many advocates when it is about women is a sexist discourse, as if the political function according to the principle of merit for men is never violated and that ethnic, religious and geographical backgrounds don't have any influence on politics.

On the other hand, we have to admit that the number of the woman-centered policies increased relatively. However, in the main axis of such policies, women are perceived with their responsibilities in the family. Within the framework of outreach programs, the position of women is perceived as a mother who cares and satisfies the needs of children, elderly people and disabled family members. As such, these sort of woman-centered policies emphasize the traditional roles of women in their family and reflect existing social gender discriminations. Therefore, most of the policies designed for women or presented as such reproduce the traditional roles of women rather than transforming them.

Briefly, we observe that activities recreate existing gender models when they are designed by denying, ignoring the inadequacy of the presence of women in politics and accepting it on the other hand. Our main argument is that we need to develop three main strategies to overcome the masculine character of politics.

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## 1. EXPOSING MASCULINE POLITICS

We think that the situation revealed by our field observations is very clear: it is not easy for women to be present and active in politics without any intervention, because politics is perceived to be the domain of men. The political domain, with its masculine terminology and language, with its position which is perceived as more privileged than all other activities, its irregular work schedule habits, its dress code and its financial requirements seems to be a space where men can much more easily adapt. Taking this granted leads to denial or inability of comprehending the lack of the presence of women in politics and how that affects women. Even the actual presence of women in these default settings of the politics might be used for the denial of this problem. We have indeed witnessed this denial many times and even heard that inequality is now against men. It may be thought that such observations reveal the conditions that prevent women from being involved in politics.

The presence and decisiveness of men in politics continue under traditional conditions without objection. People born into this culture find this normal, even natural. Even groups that have noticed this situation and further to that, those who struggle with it might continue to be influenced from such habits.

We consider that we have seen similar mistakes when working on the management practices and policies of local governments. The fact that even the groups who want women to be more active in politics and who strive for that goal think that women owe their presence in politics to actors like the president, mayors (even when the mayor is a women) and are focused on recreating traditional gender models and criticize women's movements like feminism lead us to think that they still embrace masculine tendencies we mentioned above. Consequently, gender roles are reproduced in political and managerial positions and women are seen particularly in a nurturing role. Furthermore, this perpetuates the existence of the obstacles to seeing women as independent individuals free from traditional roles and responsibilities.

From this point of view, work about the inadequate presence of women in politics would be possible at first by thoroughly exposing the default masculine settings of politics. Along these lines, it seems it is mandatory to expose in detail the explicit and implicit masculine routines of politics both to men and women and to object to the normalization of these routines so that women can have a more representative role in politics.

## 2. CREATING ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL SPACES

We have shown that the masculine nature of the politics and even the probability that it has a place in the political perception of women affects the process of going into politics. However, we should admit that the process that we call broadly as 'going into politics' is in fact an area with multiple variants and options. Mayors; council and commission membership and women's branches (of political parties), neighborhood representation, neighborhood headmanship (mukhtar) are different channels of the power area and it should be understandable which kind of a political area they represent for individuals, for the represented audience and for the city. An increase of the representation of women in politics wouldn't be sufficient for women to be active in politics where they have undeniable gender disadvantages comparing to men. As we outlined above, the biological representation of women in these areas may not guarantee the presence of actors who defend gender equality. However, if going into politics is thought as something beyond becoming a council member and taking office in the positions reserved for women within the party, the place of women in politics will be more meaningful and functional.

The way to make women's presence deeply felt passes from developing a more comprehensive understanding of urban space management in particular. Women who have more scientific and practical knowledge in more

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technical fields such as development, the environment, transportation, personnel, planning, etc., and who are skilled in using this knowledge, will inevitably have more power in politics. This can also initiate developing a political approach specific to women, bearing a female identity, spirit and approach instead of women who adopt masculine behavioral patterns and adapt themselves in playing the game by rules. Therefore, an approach that aims to make women stronger in politics should go beyond gender representation and requires work to be brought to bear to ensure that women are more active in the areas they are familiar with and/or they know better; new channels to be created and such a planning is put on the agenda.

This means that the address of the priority for empowering women politically is not political parties or managing bodies, but civil society where women can develop and strengthen their political understanding. They should be encouraged to have a voice in politics not because they are women but because they have knowledge, skills and backgrounds in a specific field and their voices must be freed from the domination of the existing masculine power relations and it should be accepted that this understanding would gradually extend over the public sphere.

### 3. SHARING EXPERIENCE

The exploration of the masculinity of politics and the creation of new political areas independently from this masculinity can only be possible by imagining and experiencing alternative strategies. Therefore, it is very important that each step and each experience to that effect are known and monitored by all the followers of similar political principles, meaning the need to build collaboration platforms for these groups. However, we have been told during the interviews that there is not enough solidarity between female politicians. Such solidarity shouldn't be limited to staying side by side around a group identity. If the decisions and the results of the decisions of women who try to enter politics under similar conditions are known by all women, this will facilitate the complex decisions of other women who haven't made those decisions yet. Especially in a country where writing biographies is weak, it is very important that women with significant experience in politics share those experiences. This could prevent women who try to exist in the political arena where men form the majority to acquire similar masculine habits and tendencies by allowing them to see other ways or even feminine ways of doing politics.

# Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

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After thoroughly examining the presence of women in the political and managerial positions of five cities and the services provided by these municipalities, we observed that women are inadequately present or represented and that the policies designed to serve to the social and political empowerment of women are unsatisfactory. Moreover, in most cases these inadequacies are either ignored or found natural. We observe that even the activities driven by gender awareness are not fully gender sensitive.

In this situation that is far from being optimistic, we suggest that a new political approach should be experienced and creating alternative political areas should ameliorate the position of women in political and social life. Three fundamental political efforts stand out in this context:

## 1. EXPLORING AND EXPOSING MASCULINITY

The masculine tendencies of politics are seen as a field of study about which we hear a lot, but the practices and dynamic of which are mostly detailed in the academic domain. If they can be designed clearly and simply enough to address wider audiences so that they can see and understand these inequalities, the masculinity of politics would be better understood. Therefore, any steps taken against them could have the support of a larger section of society.

To that effect, this masculinity could be explored by ethnographic studies and such practices can be exposed in more visual formats like films, documentaries, photography and comics. In other words, publications, expositions and informative works can be organized to popularize the topics that are intensely discussed in the academic domain through more pedagogic means.

Furthermore, the limited educational trainings with the council members and bureaucrats on gender equality can be redesigned following the gender equality approach we discussed and presented to wider range of participants.

## 2. CREATING NEW GROUNDS FOR EQUALITY

As we mentioned above, when we think that the process we generally call ‘going into politics’ consists only of taking certain positions or being elected to certain positions, the availability of these positions for women doesn’t necessarily create a weakening in the masculinity of the politics. To overcome this masculinity, we need to build new channels, the rules and dynamics of which are not under the influence of any traditional tendencies of politics. Moreover, these new grounds should be in constant interaction with local governments. The obstacles on cooperation between public sector and civil society should be detected and redesigned in a way allowing the empowerment of alternative politics. We can think that the growing numbers of groups like women co-operatives and platforms in our country can be seen as the seedbed of this understanding of alternative politics. If they propose such platforms for every aspect of social and economic life without confining them to merely women’s problem and can offer egalitarian policies in general, politics would develop as a platform where all of the individuals can each have a part in it.

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### 3. GATHERING DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES

We know there are numerous actors and organizations throughout the world those fight against the masculine tendencies of politics. To connect them to each other, and more particularly to gather the groups that have managed to certain political power levels or that have created their own political domains could also play a role in strengthening women's position in politics. Moreover, to ensure international interaction, women need to be supported for participating in international processes.

Beside mutual visits and meetings, publications and visual works should be offered so that these experiences can be understood and used and they would provide technical and moral support to women who want an egalitarian politics and share a similar fight in different parts of the world. In order to achieve that, stories of successful women politicians can be published and visualized and shared with a wide public.

The main assertion of this study is that in our country, where women's presence in politics and their chance to benefit from policies are inadequate, we need a women's policy which exposes masculinity, which creates alternative egalitarian political platforms and which is fed by similar experiences all around the world rather than purely for representation and services.







