

Understanding “The New Turkey” Through the Eyes of Women: Gender Politics in Turkish Daytime Talk-Shows - Yeşim Burul Seven and Hande Eslen-Ziya

In Turkey following the AKP's second election victory in 2007, several significant changes were made to the party programme and strategy, which later turned into a more abstractly defined new discursive and operational space called 'the new Turkey'. This slogan not only re-defined democratic practices but also brought about a backlash to gender equality and to the status of women. As media is a powerful hegemonic tool, where political actors compete to exert their influence, the analysis of daytime talk shows on television will reflect a similar gender role-making process within Turkish society. For this we study one of the most popular daytime talk shows in Turkey hosted by Seda Sayan. The framework of the study adopts the concept of discursive governance, in which discourses used by political actors can influence the public agenda through active sense-making, a process in which the media plays a critical role in disseminating and legitimating ideas, particularly in less-than-free political settings. We argue here that the Seda Sayan show is a locus of discursive governance in which the identity and habitus expressed in 'the new Turkey' is strategically projected and made so acceptable to the public mind that policy change, to affect similar behavioural shifts, is rendered unnecessary.