GSAPS THE SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

The Anti-Politics of Healthcare Reform in Turkey:
A Warfare of Cosmologies of Welfare

4013S002   Gulin Kayhan   Chief Advisor: Prof. Gracia Liu Farrer

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This thesis argues that the discourses about Turkey's Health Transformation Program (HTP) -a comprehensive reform package that has radically transformed the Turkish healthcare system since 2003- function as an anti-politics machine (Ferguson 1994, p.21) that depoliticizes a public issue that should in essence be a political debate i.e. take place in a public forum that allows democratic participation. The global promotion of the HTP as a success story contributes to the premature closure of such a public forum in Turkey where a recent surge of authoritarian populism is observed. As an attempt to counter this development, the pro- and anti-HTP stances are treated in this thesis as two polar camps of a yet unsettled controversy. In order to bypass the discussion on intentions that locks the debate into an impasse of mutual accusations, this thesis instead focuses on the unintended consequences that arose when the intentional plans of the reformers interacted with unacknowledged and unforeseen social structures in Turkey. This analysis is followed by a further exploration into how the HTP anti-politics machine operates within a cultural field where different cosmologies of welfare (Ferguson 2013) -paradigms about how to achieve common good in a given society- are at war with one another.

The concept of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is central to the global discourses on the HTP. Chapter 2 explains why the World Bank's advocacy of UHC is an important theme in the HTP controversy. The World Bank receive criticisms for its policy prescriptions regarding the healthcare systems of developing countries. Chapter 3 presents the arguments against the HTP within the context of these criticisms. Having presented the pro-HTP and anti-HTP arguments in previous chapters, the importance of approaching the antagonistic debate on the HTP as a controversy is underlined in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 introduces the concept of the anti-politics machine. Chapter 6 introduces two additional concepts: the will to improve (Li 2007) and cosmologies of welfare (Ferguson 2013) in order to lay out the conceptual foundation for Chapter 10.

Chapter 7 constitutes the first pillar of the main argument that an anti-politics machine emerged when the intentional plans of the HTP -the introduction of pay for performance (P4P) schemes in this chapter- interacted with the unacknowledged structures of the social world in Turkey and produced unintended outcomes. It first presents the global discussion on P4P schemes. Second, it presents the anti-HTP claim that P4P led to an increase in unnecessary medical procedures. It finally develops the original argument of this chapter that the unplanned terms of the debate on P4P depoliticize it through personalization. With the emergence of the notion of performance doctors, professional behavior that stems from the incentive structures that P4P creates is reduced to the personal lack of ethics. It could have instead been treated as a sociological and political issue.

Chapter 8 discusses what the HTP meant on the ground in the arena of primary healthcare provision as the second pillar of the main argument. The unintended outcomes discussed are the unforeseen rise in antibiotics consumption, and the intensification of 'a culture of complicity' (Graeber 2015, p.26). Despite being unintended, these instrumental consequences help expand 'the exercise of a particular sort of state power while simultaneously exerting a powerful depoliticizing effect' (Ferguson 1994, p. 21). The findings presented in this chapter show striking parallels to

Fagertun's (2017) observation that the diffusion of market rationality changes all kinds of social conduct by discrediting alternative politics. This chapter demonstrates how this happens at a more sinister level through the intensification of a culture of complicity.

Chapter 9 argues that the dominant discourse about violence against health workers produces a depoliticizing effect. This analysis constitutes the final pillar of the anti-politics machine approach. The existing literature on violence toward health workers in Turkey demonstrates how neoliberal reform strategies led to this violence. This chapter attempts to complement this analysis by demonstrating how a social and logistical environment that is more prone to the occurrence of violence is created inadvertently. An instrumental effect is nevertheless produced. Calling authorities to action to solve a problem that was caused in the first place by the top-down nature of their intervention further strengthens the bureaucratic hold of the state over the minute details of everyday life at public hospitals. Furthermore, this happens through the very agency of the actors that otherwise detest this bureaucratic hold and the reformers' political agenda.

Different modalities of the will to improve in Turkey inform different societal projects that envision transforming the Turkish healthcare system in certain ways. Different cosmological frameworks give shape to these modalities and their respective projects. Chapter 10 discusses what these cosmological frameworks are and how they inform the stances that the pro-HTP and anti-HTP camps take given the question of what is to be done about the Turkish healthcare system. Chapter 11 opens with a discussion of Peter Uvin's book Aiding Violence (1998) as a cautionary tale of what a failure on the part of aid agencies to see political dimensions within a recipient country might amount to. It presents recent developments in the Turkish political scene to argue that the strong endorsement of HTP as a 'democratic victory' (Horton and Lo 2013) displays a similar blindness to the rising tide of authoritarianism in Turkey.

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