A Memory of Their Own: An Exegesis on the Formation of Kurdish Political Memory in Contemporary Turkey
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Political memory studies are not so significant in Turkey and yet, we know that the political memory in Turkey is divided along the secular-religious, Turkish-Kurdish and the Sunni-Alevi tension.

My proposed presentation is based on the findings of a research project conducted in 12 different cities with 1902 people using face-to-face interviews and semi-structured surveys. The purpose of the study was to delineate which political events were remembered and what kind of feelings were associated with the event by the individual. The historical time frame was from beginning of the 20th century until 2015. Participants also responded to questions about their socio-economic background, gender, age, education, political and ethnic identity, habitus and distance to other political positions. The study showed there are different and rival political memories like secular-republican, pious, nationalist, leftist and Kurdish political memories and the findings allowed me to layout political memory repertoire in contemporary Turkey. The study gives ample reference to compare, contrast and understand the different political memories at work in Turkish society.

Specifically, this presentation will outline the memory politics related to the Kurdish issue and the components of what I prefer to call “Kurdish political memory.” A statistically significant portion of participants (6.3%) mentioned events (Sheikh Said Rebellion, Dersim Massacre, Diyarbakır Prison, The Disappearing and Forced Migration Policy of 90s, The Assassination of Musa Anter, The Death of Ahmet Kaya in Exile, The Capture of Öcalan, Roboski Bombing, etc.) related to “Kurdish political memory” and the feelings about these incidents were quite negative amongst the participants. The data also clearly shows the past remembered in the “Kurdish political memory” is primarily a concern for Kurdish people and quite limited religious (mainly Alevi) and political (predominantly leftist) groups, i.e. elements of Kurdish political memory has no significance for other aforementioned political memories.