Elisabetta Costa (2016). Social Media in Southeast Turkey: Love, Kinship and Politics. 194 pages. London: UCL Press. ISBN: 978-1-910634-52-3, 978-1-910634-53-0, 978-1-91063 4-54-7, 978-1-910634-55-4, 978-1-910634-56-1.

Elisabetta Costa's book is actually a part of a bigger project. This project includes 9 different researches conducted in Brazil, Chile, China, England, India, Italy, Trinidad and Turkey by different researchers. All of them aim to understand what social media has become in each place and the local consequences including local evaluations (Miller, 2016: v). Each of these monographs is not comparative yet there is another volume named "*How the World Changed Social Media*" written by Daniel Miller that comparative results of each monographs and also a bigger picture of the project are included.

As a part of this project, Costa lived 15 months in Mardin between April 2013 and August 2014 in order to understand the impact of social media in there. During these 15 months Turkey's political climate has been shaped by Gezi Park protests, the local elections in March 2014, the Israeli war against Gaza, autonomy of Rojava, the rise of ISIS and the crisis in Iraq and Syria (Costa, 2016: 78). I believe witnessing all these in just 15 months; tell something just by itself about the political and cultural environment of Turkey.

People living in Turkey experienced these processes in some way. Yet, considering the geographical situation of Mardin, for someone living in there, these experiences might be different from the majority. Therefore, it is important to listen people whose voice is not heard much by the majority of population instead of generalizing our own perspectives about social or political issues. Social researches are tending to generalize the findings by looking one place through positivistic approach. In fact, since individuals seen as data providers and the data may speak for itself, there is a trend suggests measuring the data with an "extreme credibility" instead of trying to understand what people are doing and why (Gürsakal, 2014: 181).

Also Costa refers to the tendency to imagine that the diffusion of the same digital technologies brings cultural homogenization and leads to social transformations in the direction of a more modern, developed or democratic society. However, there is no unique model of change or only one way being modern as studies have shown that the same technologies are used in quite different ways in different contexts and have different cultural and social consequences (2016: 3)

Costa's study based on this assumption and I think Costa's research's value lies here, not only because her aim is to understand but also because she had spent time with people in there and lived in Mardin. Contrary to Malinowski's advice about anthropologists should leave their comfort zone and go to the field in order to understand the perspective of locals there, Mardin probably wouldn't be the first choice of many researchers (Burke, 2014: 11). Costa

explains the difficulties that she encountered within Mardin; for example, locals accused her for being a UK spy as a European researcher. She also tells it was not easy to live there as a single woman on her own. She mentions that she had access for both worlds of men and women but in order to have better access to the masculine domain; she recruited male research assistants (Costa, 2016: 25).

During the study, Costa says that she developed closed relationships with around 10 families and about a 100 individuals; also she met and talked to thousands of people. In addition to interviewing around 100 people she carried out 2 different questionnaires with around 250 people. She had also conducted an online analysis of images and conversations on around 200 Facebook profiles and a few Instagram and Twitter accounts (Costa, 2016: 25).

In the beginning of the book, she describes her field site, Mardin, which is not far from the Syrian border and comprises a heterogeneous population of Arabs, Kurds, Syriac Christians and Turks (Miller, 2016: 25). Most of the research was carried out in Yenişehir, the wealthiest, modern part of the city, which has developed over the last 15 years. Costa explains that for a greater focus on social transformations, she selected this modern new city as the field site where men and women are more educated. In her study, Costa focused on young generation including Kurds and Arabs. She describes Yenişehir where the Arab culture is not hegemonic and people speak Turkish more than Arabic or Kurdish (Costa, 2016: 17). Nevertheless, it is not clearly noticed which languages Costa speaks and whether she got help or not from the assistants in order to overcome the language barrier.

In her study, Costa explains that in Mardin, people have traumatic experiences of life and this has shaped a feeling of fear and suspicion towards the "other" which is sometimes the state or a particular social group. (2016: 52) Considering Mardin's social history, where people witnessed and experienced political violence, this fear that shaped makes sense. Also this violence has reproduced a list of themes that in the offline world are "not said" and "not discussed" as Costa reveals (2016: 173). Because of the liberating and empowering characteristics of social media, its effect about this fear attracts curiosity, whether social media made the unsayable, sayable. However Costa figures out that social media has reproduced this. Since the internet is a place under state and social surveillance, the control on social media is more widespread and diffuses than offline thus the fear about politics reaches even further (Costa, 2016: 136). On the other hand social media also shifted the limits between the publicly visible and invisible (Costa, 2016: 173). Which means the government supporters are more visible and even more easily express their political ideas on social media than offline while Kurdish people feels threatened about sharing their political ideas (Costa, 2016: 138)? Besides, criticism towards the Turkish government was expressed mainly in quiet tones on Facebook (Costa, 2016: 158). The fear of safety and social relationships determine the presence or absence of political posting. In other words, Costa figures out Facebook have strengthened the political inequality

between those who adhere to the ideological model of the Turkish nation and those who do not (2016: 161).

In Mardin expressing political ideas on social media is not the only threat for some people. Unlike many others from different geographies, they also do not display intimate social relations and friendships. Because they reproduce the traditional boundaries online and they also fear that this newly produced visibility may reveal what has to be kept hidden (Costa, 2016: 80). Costa points that although people want to be visible; the disclosure of intimate, the visibility itself is a threat for people in Mardin. Yet, they are creating a balance such as focusing upon images of food, or showing the sitting rooms instead of more intimate zones like bedroom (2016: 168, 169). Costa says photos with food are very common because this is a perfect visual sign to express a rich sociality without having to show pictures of people and by doing so they display enough to achieve fame but not so much to lose morality and honor (2016: 63, 169).

Another important detection in the study is about social media creating new opportunities for women. Women aren't seen as autonomous and independent individuals. They kept under control, usually by their older male relatives. According to Costa, women achieved a new visibility with social media (2016: 28). Even though they usually use social media through fake names, identities or being very careful with the privacy settings, they participate in a new public life. Through social media, young generation, especially students and young women have the chance to contact with foreign people from other cities or countries and widen their social network (2016: 169). However, Costa adds that it has not changed the nature of already existing offline friendship in any substantial way (2016: 100). Also on social media people are always being checked up on by their family members, relatives and friends so they conform even more strictly to traditional and conservative social norms (2016: 50). In other words, while new technologies like smartphones and social media platforms like Facebook, creating more space for self-presentation and privacy it is also creating new surveillance and control mechanisms which are sometimes much more stronger than offline.

On the other hand, when it comes to men, they continue to look at women and harassing them on social media but as a consolation they have also increasingly become the object of the gazes of women since women use Facebook to observe the behavior of men and gossip about them (Costa, 2016: 169- 170). It is understood that the emancipatory characteristic of social media embodies at experiences like romantic relationships in online platforms, secretly and far from other people's eyes and gaze. In parallel, Miller states that social media has created more opportunities for secret interactions among men. Gay identities have not become more visible and public but homosexual encounters may now be secretly arranged more easily (Miller, 2016: 124).

Based on her observations, Costa makes a good analogy; since people present their best public "self" in front of the gaze of others on Facebook,

Costa likens this into traditional wedding ceremonies where women and men meet, different extended families and friends gather together and because weddings are the only public social events where women and men meet just like Facebook (2016: 51). This analogy with the traditional wedding is also reflects a kind of hyper-visible space where people look very different from their ordinary appearance and where they are not only more careful about how they appear in public, but also see it as an opportunity to display their aspirations and claims to status (2016: 79).

As a result of the study, Costa indicates that in Mardin, social media has extended individualistic inclinations and romantic desires while at the same time it is making people more concerned with the public performance of traditional values of honor and modesty (2016: 165). It appears that social media can be simultaneously both more conservative and more liberating than life offline as Miller argues (Miller, 2016: 127).

The book allows us to consider the contradictions whether social media is liberating, emancipatory or controlling in a local scale. As Hinton & Hjorth mentioned (2013: 3) and Costa found out, social media is neither entirely empowering nor entirely controlling, it is, in fact, both. At the heart of the arguments about social media as empowering, is the decentralization of content production. In other words, since today internet allows majority to produce and reproduce media content, undermines the monopolies and systems of power; it is considered as democratizing and emancipatory medium (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013: 22).

However, as it is understood from the study, social media has created new fears, surveillance and control mechanisms, it is more conservative than offline and specifically Facebook has strengthened the political inequality since people do not share their political ideas because they are worried about their safety. That's why instead of simply defining hyper-conservatism of public appearance online as a reflection of offline world, Costa defines Facebook as a hyper-conservative place that creating a unique ultra-conservative space in its own way that has no offline equivalent (2016: 171).

On the other hand, it is stated that especially for women and young generation social media provide an alternative network for socializing as long as it is a secret and as long as you are visible without seen. Then, becoming visible, by representations of selves on social media as one of the social media's liberating arguments, in this case, is dangerous. It is thought-provoking that if it is still emancipation, liberation or empowerment when it is invisible? In other words maybe we shouldn't ignore the need for a reflection of emancipation in offline as we shouldn't ignore the opportunities social media creates.

In this book, there is more than the impact of social media in Mardin since Costa lets people she studied with to tell their stories. This ethnographic study presents an opportunity to listen the stories of people in Mardin, for instance, we get chance to read about the state violence from a victim's perspective; we listen a woman telling about her husband who took their children and left

her for another woman he met online. While reading the book sometimes it feels like watching a documentary and it should read by not just academics but also by the ones who would like to touch the other's lives.

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