ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Youth environmental citizenship formation: Struggled political subjectivities and everyday experiences of young people in Turkey

Turkan Firinci Orman[1] ⓘ | Seran Demiral[2] ⓘ

[1]Department of Design, School of Arts, Design and Architecture, Aalto University, Espoo, Finland

[2]Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Istanbul Arel University, Istanbul, Turkey

Correspondence
Turkan Firinci Orman, Department of Design, School of Arts, Design and Architecture, Aalto University, Espoo, Finland.
Email: turkan.firinciorman@aalto.fi

Abstract

This ethnographic study reveals how young people become environmentally aware citizens. The study traces the lived worlds of early youth in Turkey by focusing on their environmental experiences and by problematising climate change and consumerism. Through online mapping activities and in-depth interviews, the applied geo-social methodology explores the social, spatial and political subjectivities of 21 young people from different parts of Turkey, elucidating their developing environmental agencies. This article further argues how these subjectivities are contextual to the intersectional aspects of environmental socialisation. The results provide youthful insights into today's authoritarian Turkey, which is facing an economic recession.

KEYWORDS
environmental agency, geo-social methodology, intersubjectivity, socio-spatial socialisation, youth in Turkey

INTRODUCTION

Without full citizenship entitlements and holding a marginal status in society, many young people today demand action about climate change, performing various types of environmental agency embedded in their socially, economically and ecologically complex world. This article aims to reveal how children and young people become environmentally aware

citizens, not through the youth who are actively involved in climate activism in the public sphere, but by focusing on young people's everyday realities and their youthful ways of engaging with climate change-related issues (Firinci Orman, 2022a). We report on partial data obtained from an extensive multi-site ethnographic research project on youth environmental citizenship, drawing on young people's lived experiences in Turkey, where an authoritarian welfare regime (ruled by AKP—Turkey's Justice and Development Party) is affecting youth participation (see Walther et al., 2020) and their citizenship practices in significant ways.

AKP's youth and education policy has been scarcely studied. However, the literature suggests that AKP blends social conservatism, religious discourse and neoliberalism in these policies. It pursues an ethno-religious nationalist project to forge a new Islamic-Turkish identity and shape youth through pro-government civil society (disregarding youth diversity and multiplicity), unlike the secular Kemalist social engineering (Lüküslü, 2016; Yabanci, 2021).

Youth environmental citizenship scholarship in Turkey is limited and education field-focused (see Kovách et al., 2021; Oral et al., 2022). Critical perspectives (e.g. youth geographies, critical pedagogy) are gradually missing. Moreover, Neas et al. (2022) call for more research on youth climate activism beyond the Global North and the context of Wealthy. We aim to examine the environmental consumer practices and experiences of early youth in Turkey context to address these gaps.

This article explores how early youth in Turkey are forming their environmental identities. Accordingly, we studied their political subjectivities and socio-spatial socialisation. We believe that it is of great importance to acknowledge young people with oppressed (environmental) identities in Turkey, where democracy is contested by the country's authoritarian turn, resulting in serious and alarming limitations in exercising basic freedoms (Bee, 2021), and where the economy faces a major recession (Altınörs & Akçay, 2022). We attempt to acknowledge the *intersectionality*, as it is situated in particular social and spatial contexts of inequalities (Yuval-Davis, 2015), by exploring unequal participation of young people along the social divisions of gender, ethnicity, class, religious identity and rural–urban origin.

Problematising early youth's lived experiences of consumption and climate change actions, we challenge the traditional environmental citizenship frameworks (e.g. consumer and green citizenship) that citizenship scholarship offers (Bellino & Adams, 2017; Hobson, 2013) by focusing on everyday environmental activism (see Firinci Orman, 2022a). Thus, we build on the concept of *lived citizenship*, which has been explored by several studies (Bartos, 2012; Kallio & Mills, 2016; Lister et al., 2003; Wood, 2010), demonstrating the intersubjective, performed and spatial character of children's everyday environment (Percy-Smith, 2015; Olsson, 2017; Baraldi & Cockburn, 2018; see also Kallio et al., 2020). Lived citizenship highlights the significance of citizenship as it is experienced and enacted in various real-life contexts (Firinci Orman, 2022a; Kallio et al., 2020). It was theorised by Engin Isin (2008, 2009, 2019) based on his 'acts of citizenship' idea.

Lived citizenship recognises the embodied and relational dimensions of being a young citizen (Isin, 2008) and therefore focuses on the spatiality of citizenship. The lived approach considers how citizenship matters in young people's lives and how their backgrounds and circumstances shape their experiences. It recognises youth as different but equal to adults, with political potential in their participation (see Kallio et al., 2015; Lister, 2008). Our study explores how young people in Turkey construct their environmental citizenship through various experiences and subjectivities. We argue that environmental citizenship is a complex and dynamic concept that reflects the diverse ways that youth engage with environmental issues and politics.

Methodologically, the study follows the geo-social approach developed by Kallio (2018a, 2018b); Kallio et al. (2020), which offers a bottom-up understanding of agency and highlights the dynamics of everyday life in communities in which young people lead their lives (Firinci Orman, 2022b; Habashi, 2017; Kallio, 2018a). *Geo-socialisation* redefines socialisation from *intersubjective* (intergenerational: social dynamics) (Elwood & Mitchell, 2012; Kallio, 2018a), *spatial* (topological: sociality permeates all spatial relations) (Joronen, 2016; See Kallio & Häkli, 2017) and *political* (politicisation: important matters in people's lived worlds) dimensions (Häkli & Kallio, 2018; Kallio, 2014, 2016). These social, spatial and political dimensions function as analytical layers of the geo-social methodology. Accordingly, this article attempts to further this approach by applying it specifically to the subject of youth environmental citizenship formation, to collect and analyse geo-social data from different sites and scales in Turkey context.

We studied general youth in Turkey who are inactive in climate activism and movements. Recently Turkey introduced an elective course on 'environmental education and climate change' (MEB, 2022), but before that, environmental topics were taught through other courses like life science, science and biology (Öz-Aydın et al., 2022). Many high school students in Turkey find opportunities to participate in TUBITAK-funded (research institute in Turkey) projects on climate change with teacher supervision. However, participating in demonstrations on climate change or engaging in climate activism is not feasible for many individuals due to the high level of political pressure they encounter (Bee, 2021).

Building on the above-mentioned critical conceptualisations of children's lived citizenship and geo-socialisation, this article reports early findings from field research conducted in Turkey, uncovering the subjectivities of youth's identity formation and highlighting their everyday environmental experiences. Following the analysis, this article further argues how these subjectivities are contextual to the intersectional aspects of environmental socialisation. Finally, we discuss how youth subjectivities often reflect different environmental identity contexts and relate to the power relations that are crystalised in social relations.

STUDY METHODS

Applying the geo-social methodology (see Kallio, 2018a; Kallio et al., 2020), the study included 21 young people aged 13–17 years from different parts of Turkey. All participants have diverse social positionings regarding gender, ethnicity, religion, class and other contextually relevant aspects. The researchers used their teachers' networks and municipal child rights projects to reach out to young individuals who are either in the last year of their secondary studies or attend high schools in the central neighbourhoods of their respective cities, considering their commonly cosmopolitan demographic character. Due to pragmatic reasons, such as reaching to diverse localities in Turkey that are less studied, both urban and rural, we collected our data digitally. Most of our participants had prior experience in institutional participation through youthful school or municipal projects, but not necessarily about the environment.

This study was conducted as part of a larger project on youth environmental citizenship and focused on the data collected through online mapping activities and online in-depth interviews. Although other ethnographic research activities, such as essay writing, piloting VR workshops and online focus groups, were incorporated, they are not included in this report.

The fieldwork began with an online mapping exercise (see Kallio, 2018b, 2021) applied digitally on a Padlet map, wherein the participants were asked to mark the most significant (meaningful) place for them (neighbourhood, city, regional, national and global). They were then asked

to reflect on their lived experiences of climate-related issues and their consumption habits. Following the instructions, the participants pinned their notes of these places on a map and also attributed a colour to them (red for negative, green for positive and yellow for neutral feelings regarding the place). This activity not only enabled us to observe the spatial subjectivities of these young people but also prepared both sides to have more personalised conversations during the interviews.

In-depth, semi-structured online interviews were conducted, and they included discussions on the lived experiences of young people (e.g. the themes followed as their biographies, everyday life experiences, mapping exercise, consumption habits and actions related to climate change). The interviews used analytical layers of the geo-social methodology to collect and analyse data about (social, spatial, political aspects of their lived experiences) basically in the everyday context of their consumer practices and actions taken to mitigate climate change. The questions aimed to reveal the situational character of their lived worlds (or as imagined), examining their social contexts with friends and family, their pets and nature (as non-human agents); spatiality as lived and experienced places and mobility (including temporalities); and politization as the most salient, meaningful and significant themes in their lives. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed individually in-depth to observe the connections within young people's relational worlds based on their experiential knowledge.

Ethical considerations and procedures

The power was shared between the researchers and the young participants. Researchers made sure that young participants feel safe, cared and understood with full respect and equity and took small but effective steps to build trust. For example, during the video interview, one female participant took the opportunity to reverse the roles and interviewed the researcher. The same participant later offered to interview her cousin, playing the role of a research assistant.

The study followed ethical, dialogical and participatory principles, obtaining written informed consent from all participants and their parents. The researchers respected the participants' autonomy and agency to withdraw or discontinue their involvement at any point, which three of them did after the mapping activity and two others before starting. The researchers also ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants by using pseudonyms and selecting the socio-demographic data and details that were reported in this article with caution.

In this study, we adopted a sustainability approach by using eco-friendly methods, means and tools to conduct a digital ethnography of young people's lived worlds. We also facilitated participants' learning, discussion and interaction in a way that enhanced their enjoyment of their unique participatory experience and their awareness of consumption, climate change and nature-respecting decision-making. Through the mapping activity and spatial aspect of the geo-social methodology, participants also gained deeper insights on their locality and environmental experiences.

EXPLORING POLITICAL REALITIES FROM YOUTHFUL PERSPECTIVES

As discussed earlier, the geo-social methodology builds on a threefold conceptual baseline as analytical layers: social relatedness, spatial relationality and experience-based politics (Kallio, 2018b).

We demonstrate the geo-social subjectivities of environmental identity formation and discuss how young people's political agency and environmental criticality are situated and socially embedded in their lived worlds and are highly contextual. Environmental subjectivities are traced through the most important and meaningful people (e.g. family, friends and role models), places (e.g. lived, visited, near or far) and events (appearing suddenly or from familial reasons, inspiring or oppressive) embedded in mundane experiences. These youthful experiences include current, past or future perspectives, real or imagined attributions as well as personal or public concerns. In this section, the subjectivities are exemplified as findings through selected individual case examples.

Geo-social subjectivities of environmental identity formation

> **Example 1.** Sanem (15) lives in the eastern part of Ankara, Turkey, with her retired mother and stepfather. The family shares a secular political culture in which Sanem has certain kinds of freedoms and agency as the youngest family member. Sanem plays guitar and is part of a rock band. She enjoys visiting her biological father at her summer house, where she spends time with friends and connects with nature, the Aegean Sea and the starry sky. Sanem also has health problems, which have made her nutrition practices more sensitive.

Sanem's awareness of healthy food consumption also raised her awareness of climate issues. Her insulin resistance is high, and she often visits the doctor for check-ups so that her sensitivity does not turn into diabetes. Due to her health concerns, she complains about weather pollution in Ankara and points to her personal experience:

> When I am in Ankara, my voice is thicker and more forked. When I come here (the summer house), I can breathe more easily because there are forests around. Or here I have doctor check-ups every month, but I don't go for a month or two in the summer. When I go back to Ankara, the results are very good. Because the pollution here is less compared to other cities.

Sanem explains the meaning of the most important place for her, the place that she admires—the summer house:

> I realise that every summer I come here and return as a different person. Because my friends are very wise. Well, I mean, we all come from different cities. We are of different ages; we all have different lives. Since we can only see each other in the summer, we always add something to each other's personality....

> 'I can't see any stars in Ankara, not even one. That's why I'm very happy when I come here. Because too many stars are visible. There is even a Nebula that I can see from here'.

The social and transformative aspects of friendships and nature's positive effect are significant to her. These socio-spatial aspects play a critical role for Sanem in forming her environmental identity. For instance, Sanem prefers ecological options if they are available. She explained the reason:

> I try to buy eco-friendly products. For example, there are vegan products. Or materials that will not harm nature in the fabric.

As for cosmetics or dermatological products, she prefers vegan products and avoids those tested on animals. As she expresses her love of nature, diversity and all living creatures, she draws attention to ethical choices. She said that, since she is allergic to many different things, she has to check what the product consists of.

> **Example 2.** Emre (15) lives in a city located in central Turkey, on the southwestern edge of the region. Due to his disturbed asthma caused by air pollution in Istanbul, the family moved to their current city. Emre lives with his middle-income family (one older sister, one younger brother and parents) in a neighbourhood where there are many vineyards, gardens and agricultural areas. His father is highly educated, and his mother is a housewife. He has a special connection to her mother, who loves everything that is natural. He, like his other family members, describes himself as Muslim. He is interested in the literature and enjoys reading and writing.

Emre explains how bad his trip to Istanbul was because of his asthma:

> Kağıthane was one of the dirtiest places I've ever seen in my life. You know, it was already very polluted in terms of air and in every sense. I could directly feel it too. It's not nice.

Emre thinks that nature affects human behaviour in many positive ways. For him, it helps people connect and live in solidarity. He describes his neighbourhood, which makes him feel secure and happy:

> Since we are intertwined with nature, most of us know what plants can do in general. We are in constant solidarity in these kinds of issues, in helping each other know what is good for what. So, I love my neighbourhood. People are constantly trying to understand each other, and I think that's a good thing.

He regrets to see that the people around him could be that firm and wall up, even though they are quite similar. Emre's project trip to one European country has given him a new perspective about cultures, tolerance and friendships. For him, differences did not restrict communication; however, it was surprising for him to experience such a rich connection with the people he met there.

> I wished that all the people here were like this. Because there were people of different religions. We even had female friends with head coverings in our group. We met Muslims, Christians.... They all communicated with us in some way. They asked too many questions. We shared so many things.

Emre politicises these experiences and links the theme of tolerance in the context of sexuality, which he thinks is an important aspect of building his identity. He also shared how he feared this intolerance.

A gay couple cannot walk around in my city holding hands. Because I really can't imagine the hatred they will inflict. Hate crimes are likely to occur. This scares me too, because I have a bisexual friend, and I also have friends who do not want to define themselves with a specific gender identity. This scares me, and I fear for them too. I do not believe that I have completely discovered myself. That's why I'm afraid for everyone because I can't fully define what I will be and who I will become.

Emre cares about ethical consumption and is willing to make meaningful changes to fight climate change. Emre spends his money mainly to buy second-hand books and visits such bookstores regularly. He also does not want to buy first-hand clothes and is against fast-fashion trends. Therefore, he wishes to support textile products that are produced by natural elements and shares his experiences with cosmetics:

I only buy vegan and cruelty-free products anyway. I try not to buy other products. I don't think it's right either. I never shop from cosmetic brands that are too extreme. My mother usually tries to make something from plants and herbs herself. I use a cream that she makes herself, for example.

Emre's close relation with his mother, direct connection with nature and the lifestyle they follow in semi-rural spaces are some remarkable aspects, together with the health drawback that he has, that made him more sensitive to the pollution and environment.

Example 3.   Alen (13) is from Istanbul, Sisli—one of the most developed neighbourhoods in Turkey, with many historical artefacts, workplaces, modern trade centres, culture, etc. She lives in an old apartment house, which is typical in this part of the city. She has a younger brother and grandmother living with them. Her parents are highly educated. Her interests include attending to the bale classes, listening to the pop music and participating to the science clubs. Alen is proud to belong to the Armenian community. She also has aesthetic worries about the places and spaces surrounding her.

Alen shared that they had holiday trips to Greece several times with their family friends. She pointed out that her mother's profession is significant in choosing the places they took the trips to.

My father has friends from high school. They are also my godmother and godfather. They are very curious about Greece or something. Of course, as one of my parents is a tourism professional, s/he becomes even more knowledgeable, and we decide where to go like Thassos, Halkidiki, Thessaloniki, etc.

The traditions, family habits and routines—such as visiting the Princes' Islands in the summertime, where they have a house with a big garden—give further insights into her socio-spatial experiences. Alen has had the chance to experience both urban and rural spaces quite often. Visiting her relatives in rural Bulgaria every year, she expressed how she felt:

> The pigs in the village are so beautiful. It is such a relief when you go there from that crowd in Turkey, especially in the neighbourhood where I live in Istanbul, from those high buildings! Wide sidewalks, empty streets, parks, trees. It makes me feel good there.

It is noteworthy that one of the most important factors in Alen's spatial socialisation is her touristic trips. Alen seems to evaluate places through commercial lenses; thanks to her parent's profession, approaching nature and the environment at large as a beauty to be consumed, enjoyed and visited.

We observed that Alen did not reflect any specific criticality towards climate change and consumerism. Her habits of buying goods, food and clothes as well as other everyday consumer experiences are shaped by her immediate environment. As she lives in the heart of a mega city surrounded by global brands of fashion, her experiences bring her to the position that she can reach nature only in her summer holidays by usually paying for a touristic tour.

> **Example 4.** Salih (17) is from a city in western Turkey, a mountainous countryside. He lives with his mother, younger brother and stepfather. He thinks he is like a second parent to his brother. He has highly educated parents, with one of them having an academic career. Salih lives in the city centre, and his school is within walkable distance. He has diverse interests, such as history, politics, opera, religions and sciences. He spends more time with adults and/or older people than himself, as he has troubled relationships with his peers.

Salih shares that the most consequential event in his life was his parents' divorce:

> We've had a lot of legal cases. So, they managed to get divorced after long years of conflict and a legal fight. They were divorced in the Supreme Court, and I participated in many of these trials as a witness. And the environment I was surrounded by was very uncomfortable. The Supreme Court!

This experience seems to be very significant to his identity formation and how he sees the world at large. Salih also approaches the environment from a legal perspective and points to societal structures. For example, in the mapping activity, he marked Glasgow in the context of the Glasgow Climate Pact, pointing to the fact that, without any sanctions, such agreements are deficient. He shares his utopic thoughts in approaching the problems:

> I think there should be a universal elector to deal with climate issues. This should be a commanding force on the climate. It is said that 50 years from now, there will be no snow in Finland. There are some rumours that in forty years, maybe even less, Venice will be underwater. We cannot leave this to the states' own pleasure. I think a higher authority should be established.

He furthers the discussion and criticises the international system for not being just. By referring to the Kyoto Protocol, he argues that governments sometimes can overlook the climate issue in line with their own interests.

Although Salih seems to have criticality towards climate issues and sees himself as an aware consumer, it becomes obvious that all the solutions that he brings are almost always top-down. He dreams of becoming a powerful leader, a commander, an important public figure, envies historical characters of monarchies and nations and is attracted by extreme power.

Example 5. Rana (15) was born in Syria and sought asylum with her family in Turkey. She currently lives in Bahcelievler, Istanbul, a large middle-class residential suburb on the European side of the city. Rana learned to read and write on her own by watching TV in Gaziantep, where her family stayed for years until she and her mother reunited with the working men of their family—the father and two brothers—in Istanbul, where they own a small workshop. Rana could enrol in the school system from the secondary level only after they moved to Istanbul. Rana likes reading novels and drawing, and she aspires to study journalism at the university.

Facing financial difficulties and discrimination, Rana usually stays at home with her mother after her school time. Her phone, which she shares with her mother, and the Internet are her only windows to the outer world of diversity, information and hope. She does not have any close friends; thus, she socialises with her cousin in Syria through video calls and sometimes goes for walks in nearby parks.

Rana's favourite place in Istanbul is Masumiyet Muzesi (The Museum of Innocence), which she has never visited. Yet, she checked the museum on the Internet and fell in love with the space as she was reading the book on which it is based (Orhan Pamuk's novel of the same name).

Although she normalises that Istanbul is bigger than Gaziantep, where people live in large communities including extended families, neighbours, etc., she complains about Istanbul:

> For example, we sometimes encounter neighbours here in our apartment. They stare back badly like that. Yet, you don't need to look like that. What did I do to you?

When asked, she especially wanted to talk about formal citizenship and that she wanted to become a Turkish citizen. She says that she is never ashamed of being Syrian, but she thinks that if she can get Turkish citizenship, it would at least prevent racist encounters. She also shared that at her school, Turkish and Syrian students are grouped and are sometimes offensive to each other.

Although she does not show any criticality towards climate change and consumption, based on her very subjective experiences that she has had as a refugee, Rana is quite agentic and even took the lead in the interview, asking a number of questions to the researcher, one being in the following.

> Rana: I was told that you wanted to interview a Syrian refugee, or so I understood. Did you change the subject? You approached me like an ordinary young person and asked about my experiences and thoughts about the environment.

This question reconfirmed that, to a large extent, Rana defines her identity through her being a refugee and through her formal citizenship conditions; she has formed a perception that all other issues should be understood within this framework. The researcher replied:

> Researcher: In my opinion, Rana is a 15-year-old girl who makes beautiful drawings, reads a lot and plans to become a reporter, and her experiences and perspective as a young person are very important for this research project.

Example 6. Mihran (17) lives in a small city in north-western Turkey on the Sea of Marmara, one of the districts in Balikesir Province. He was born in Karaman and lived there until he was 12. He lives with his parents. He comes from a low-income

family, with both of his parents working. He also has an older brother, who has recently graduated from university, and an older sister, who is a teacher in another city. He wants to study English and hold a profession based on foreign languages, similar to his siblings.

Mihran shared how he felt when they moved to Balikesir from Karaman, which typically refers to the different values of Western and Eastern culture in Turkey.

> I encountered a culture that I did not know at all. Because it is a city of Central Anatolia on one side and a city of Marmara on the other. I had such a hard time balancing the two of them at first. But over time, I realised that people here are much more understanding and more knowledgeable on some issues.

This tension between the cultures he experienced became visible when he shared the story of his mobility. On one hand, he is nostalgic about the large family environment and the old habits of living and sharing together in the countryside, but on the other hand, he is very much attached to his current city and environment. Based on his own visits, he compares Gaziantep (located in East Turkey) with other cities (from the western part of Turkey) in terms of their resilience to climate change:

> When we look at Ayvalık or Antalya, they are really beautiful; they have forests to protect them. Or, to put it simply, solar panels have been placed in drought-prone areas in most Central Anatolian cities so that they can turn them green again. Unfortunately, I have not seen anything like this in Gaziantep. Therefore, unfortunately, it is one of the cities that I do not think is ready for the effects of climate change.

Mihran thinks the most important person to him is himself, sharing how he wishes to have an ordinary but happy life in the future. He then refers to Lorelia (from the Gilmore Girls serial) and adds that he wants to live in California, just like her:

> It′s a really cool TV show. Only the ordinary lives of a mother and her daughter are told. And I think it′s a very precious life. Because we are all exposed to such a lot of stress and anger during the day, and when I look at that screen, I see two very calm characters. I love how Lorelia approaches life with humour; in a way, she takes everything lightly. When I look at myself twenty years from now, I guess I want to be like Lorelia.

Mihran′s admiration of Western culture also becomes visible in his consumption habits, friendships, hobbies and the contents that he encounters through movies, music, etc. Having both rural and urban practices and expressing his social identity through the products potentially used as part of status and in reference to Western culture point to the complexity of Mihran′s identity formation (see Sandikci et al., 2006; Ustuner & Holt, 2010).

Mihran has the advantage of studying English, which enables him to digitally retrieve any information that he seeks to explore the world on a global scale, including his interest in ethical consumption and climate action.

I think we need to have an ethical approach in everything we consume, from the ingredients we consume to the products we buy. That's why I really value the originality of the content, especially when listening to music or watching any series or movies. So, I'm trying to get my music from Spotify and my series from Netflix. Because there is a great effort that turns out dark.

Although Mihran is not a vegetarian, he is aware of ethical nutrition.

It's not very common in Turkey, but I'm trying to accustom myself to plant milk, for example, which I've read a lot about. I really try to pay attention to how animals are harmed and how it harms our body, especially lactose.

Example 7. Emine (17) lives in a small city in northern Turkey, standing in the mountains above the coast of the Black Sea. They moved from Istanbul to their home city, where her mother married his stepfather. She has two sisters. Her biological father is a farmer, whereas his stepfather works in a private company, and her mother is a housewife. As a low-income family, they face financial difficulties. She likes being with friends and listening to Turkish folk music. She has plans to study law at the university.

Emine tells how much she loves her city, adding that it is impossible to see any 'immorality or disrespectfulness' around, pointing to the social relationships, their community and the comforts of living there. She praises her city while talking about its religious culture and heritage:

There are ninety-eight saints in our city. If there were one more saint, here would be like Mecca and Medina. It is also an important city in a mystical sense.

She also proudly explains that she and her friends share the same interests and that they are similar even in terms of their physical appearance. Possessing a noticeable townsman discourse, she sounds like having no tolerance to differences, as she internalises the values of the community she belongs to. She does not take any critical stand regarding her environment and has an ultimate optimism.

Emine shares that young people, including herself, have connections to nearby villages, where they participate in agricultural activities, such as gardening or harvesting, helping their grandparents. Two times a week, she labours in the fields, where her grandfather grows okra and many other vegetables and fruits. This experience, which she says could be very tiring and unpleasant at times, is significant to her environmental identity formation. Emine knows a lot about growing okra:

Growing okra is a very difficult job. Well, planting is quite different, but it is necessary to collect it one by one at the time of harvest. It is necessary to water it from time to time. It is necessary to separate the collection into a row of flowers and arrange them one by one. Generally, they get the flower first. The tibia is used as a seed. There are people who use the line for different jobs.

Having such rich experiences with nature in rural settings and access to natural food, Emine spends her pocket money usually to buy junk food or packaged/industrial products (e.g. chocolate, candies or ice cream). The money is spent on other necessities. As her consumption habits are shaped by her spatial experiences, she does not seem to have any criticality towards climate change and/or interest in environmental movements. Rather, she explains climate change through her own rural experiences:

> It's been getting dark here for two or three days. There are thunders but it never rains. So, when everyone expects it to rain, it doesn't rain. When it is said that it will never rain, it rains. So, we live in a situation where everything is turned upside down.

For Emine, recycling not only relates to how we manage waste at the municipal and city levels; she believes that it should also be understood in a broader sense and should relate to every action that we take in our daily lives. We understood how she transferred her practice-based (tacit) knowledge into her short film on recycling (a school project), offering a micro approach to the zero-waste idea, mimicking nature's life cycle (e.g. crushing eggshells and giving them to plants).

> When we say recycling, the first thing that comes to mind is paper, plastic, glass and how they are sorted. When everyone says recycling, even the boxes we see on the street are made on it. It has different colours and categories. But I wanted to evaluate it in a broader sense in my film.

INTERSECTIONAL ENCOUNTERS AND YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL IDENTITY FORMATION

In this section, we discuss the unequal participation and belonging of young people along social divisions. Our analysis aims to provide a snapshot of differential positionings along different axes of power (see Yuval-Davis, 2015) through the interplay between situated identities and domains of gender, ethnicity, religion and class. Through examples of different positionings, we aim to demonstrate how young peoples' environmental identities are contested by the inequalities they face.

Gender

Gender is typically one of the most important categories that many oppressed young people in Turkey refer to. For example, Sanem (15) describes her gender as 'she/her' and talks about her ongoing questioning and non-binary position.

> There are many among my friends who express their gender identity differently or have different orientations. I, for example, do not currently define myself as belonging to any specific gender orientation because I'm currently in my adolescence. Okay! So far, for example, I have liked boys. But I still don't know if I would like girls or not.

Esra (15) feels lucky to have such a father, who she thinks is different from other men in Turkey. She politicises a very personal issue—her relationship with her father in connection to a more general phenomenon, such as violence against women in Turkey.

> We hear fathers raping their children, restricting them. Or because of this traditionalism prevalent in Anatolia, girls are treated more restrictively in the name of protection; they are not given their rights or they are not allowed to live fully. I am aware that I should not feel lucky just because I am not directly exposed to these problems. The lack of these problems is normal and neutral, but thanks to our country! I'm seriously at a point where I call myself lucky, as I do not go through such problems.

Emine (17), having lived with her mother, two sisters and her aunt in solidarity for a long time after the divorce of her parents, points to the fact that in Eastern culture, women are unfortunately positioned as secondary:

> I always make positive discrimination in this regard. I never hesitate to say it. So, seeing a woman at an important status makes me happy. Unfortunately, they say 'a woman is a wolf to another woman'. But I believe the woman should be the home of the other woman instead.

While Sanem positions herself in relation to her friends (interpersonal networks), Esra politicises her relationship with her father (intergenerational) and Emine reflects upon her siblings (familial) to address their gendered oppressions. The geo-social construction of youth identities is, therefore, visibly relational and complex when analysed in terms of gendered experiences.

Class

The negative effects of economic crises on youth in Turkey are very significant. In times of crisis, class positionings could shift dramatically, as the macro trends of finances always pressurise the poor most. With a significant decline in purchasing power, young people from low-income families are experiencing major inequalities, which was also a common life experience observed among the interviewees. Due to financial difficulties and limited resources, many outlined that they cannot afford their textbooks, have big worries for the future and are unable to realise their capacities fully in the face of coercive isolation. Some are even waiting for an opportunity to leave the country and make a life elsewhere.

Ece (15), being one of these oppressed individuals, reflects her disadvantage by saying, We (the children) do not look after these financial issues, we only choose what our parents offer us. She has to stay at home and study hard to get the highest scores and become a doctor. As doctors earn well, her parents (with a poor educational background) position her as the saviour of the family, putting high pressure on her. Financial issues are sensitive; Ece has neither financial control over her basic needs, nor does she have personal choices and preferences. She is ignorant as her mother decides on finances and basic needs. In her own words:

Usually, I don't care much about such things as my mother takes care of our clothes, food and drinks. I don't focus too much because my mom knows best anyway.

Ethnicity

The intolerant and racist encounters of young people in Turkey contribute to their marginalised positions. Ethnicity and belonging to their communities are, without a doubt, problematic for several refugees and migrants living in Turkey, with Rana (15) being one of them. Being a young refugee puts her in a position of extreme isolation and exclusion. Although they have a TV at home, Rana prefers not to watch anything other than some entertaining contents (e.g. Turkish serials). She explained the reason:

I don't watch the news. Because, you know, we are Syrians. That's why, for example, when we look at the news, bad news comes out about us. Then, you can easily get upset. That's why.

Rana posits and distances herself within the dominant culture, making clear that her ethnic identity puts her in a vulnerable position, which she was aware of from a young age. Rana shares her memory as one of the most substantial events in her life:

When I was in Gaziantep, there were mosques. I was attending a Quran course. Turks didn't like me there. So when I say Turks, I don't mean you. For example, some are good, some are bad. Just like our Syrians. They didn't like me; they excluded me. We had a teacher there. She bought me a toy. Everyone got jealous. Other kids were older than me. For example, I've kept that toy until now.

Alen (13), as a young member of the Armenian community in Turkey, determines her social interactions and lived experiences, as spaces are significant to her social circles and networks. The traditions, family habits and routines, such as visiting the Princes' Islands in the summertime, give further insights into her geo-social socialisation:

We already have a garden in our house on the island. We live in a two-story detached house. My mother's old house. Well, it has a beautiful garden. That garden is already breezy. Compared to Istanbul, the island has a much nicer and cooler atmosphere.

Alen uses the 'we' pronoun while talking about both her family and the Armenian community in Istanbul as an indicator of her sense of belonging.

Religion

In Turkey, where religious values are constantly promoted, conservative practices appear to be an important factor in the environmental identity-building process of young people. On the one hand, lived religious values could cause conflicts with the youth's environmental identities, which could create ideological tensions (see Bebek, 2017). On the other hand, some religious

practices could overlap with environmental values. The latter could be associated with the Islamist discourses of anti-consumerism (see Izberk-Bilgin, 2010) and include complexities. The following examples showcase a snapshot of such encounters.

Defining himself as a believer of Islam, Emre (15), who has ethical consumption habits, shares that although he is not a vegan, he would still wish to have such an opportunity. He explains why he cannot practice veganism because of the underlying contradictions it has with his religious practices.

> I am not vegan. Because of our faith, we have to sacrifice an animal on Eid al-Adha. Actually, I'm not very pro. I follow vegan pages, but I am not yet vegan. Because I don't have the means for that. If I decide to go vegan right now, I cannot provide the necessary nutrients myself. I don't think I can get enough protein or something. Because there are not enough places selling vegan food in the city I live.

In contrast to Emre's position, many female participants who come from religious families and/or are surrounded by conservative values (some wearing head scarfs) inhabit gendered positionings. As a common practice, these young women spend their spare time mostly in a private sphere, with cooking as a typical hobby and participation in care practices, especially when they have younger siblings. Their consumer practices and/or discourse on consumption could be easily mixed with ethical consumption practices at first sight. For example, Ebrar's (17) everyday consumer experiences are mostly shaped by her parents' approach towards goods, reflecting Muslim values. According to Ebrar's opinion, a good and conscious consumer is 'thrifty' and is always careful to 'not waste'. Thus, her morality would tell her to restrict her consumption. However, in fact, waste is perceived as a sin; her actions do not relate to the idea of preserving the environment but rather to being a good Muslim.

As discussed above, different types of inequalities and different types of power and domination can be effective in the formation of youth's environmental identities in the context of Turkey; they are interrelated to both the macro structures (e.g. state's governance as an authoritarianism and economic crisis) and micro-social aspects (e.g. networks, communities and groups as politics of belonging) of young people's experiential lives.

FINAL REMARKS

Building on an ethnographic field study, this article presents an outline of the youth's environmental subject formation in Turkey by applying a geo-social methodological approach (thematising consumption and climate change) to analyse the lived political subjectivities that are significant in developing youthful perspectives. Exploring the political realities from subjective perspectives enabled us to study early youth's socio-spatial socialisation in Turkey, where youth's active citizenship practices are not always visible in the public sphere. We also showed that environmental identity formation is highly contextual and is influenced by the power relations embedded in the everyday encounters of young people in Turkey, be it gender, class, ethnicity or religion, among others.

Although subject formation is an ongoing process throughout the life course, the early years of life are significant, particularly because of their intensity (Habashi, 2017; Kallio, 2018a), including turning points and significant events, such as life course transitions through migration, societal and/or personal crisis, etc. The study results reaffirmed the intersubjective character of

environmental subject formation in early youth, demonstrating the importance of everyday social encounters, including relationships with peers, young people, adults and within other social networks.

The study also displayed the oppressed (environmental) identities of youth in Turkey, as political upbringing and financial obstacles are creating additional pressure on their existing struggles in the context of traditional and religious practices and the in-betweenness of West–East cultures. The study results also showed how young people build their environmental identities through their experiences and how the intersectional aspects can be traced through findings on politicised youthful matters.

Comparing youth (environmental) citizenship across welfare regimes (e.g. authoritarian, social democratic and liberal) can reveal different relational and spatial patterns (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). We suggest future studies use comparative experimental designs while employing geo-social methodology and adopt critical geographical perspectives to examine youthful identities as evolving and dynamic.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight the relevance of the geo-social methodological approach in studying environmental citizenship formation from the bottom up, which unpacks youth's subjective capacities through their lived worlds, reflecting the youthful ways of being and becoming. We believe that shifting the focus to everyday environmentalism and geo-social aspects of identity formation is crucial in studying how young people become environmentally aware citizens in different geographical contexts, pointing to their unequal/unbalanced or marginalised positions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research data are not shared.

ORCID

Turkan Firinci Orman 🅾 https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9137-0899
Seran Demiral 🅾 https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9618-8295

REFERENCES

Altınörs, G., & Akçay, Ü. (2022). Authoritarian neoliberalism, crisis, and consolidation: The political economy of regime change in Turkey. *Globalizations*, *19*(7), 1029–1053. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747 731.2021.2025290

Baraldi, C., & Cockburn, T. (2018). Introduction: Lived citizenship, rights and participation in contemporary Europe. In C. Baraldi & T. Cockburn (Eds.), *Theorising childhood: Citizenship, rights and participation* (pp. 1–27). Springer International Publishing.

Bartlett, L., & Vavrus, F. (2017). *Rethinking case study research: A comparative approach*. Routledge.

Bartos, A. E. (2012). Children caring for their worlds: The politics of care and childhood. *Political Geography*, *31*(3), 157–166.

Bebek, G. (2017). Turkish Consumers' response to westernised ethical consumption culture: An acculturation theory approach. In A. Gneezy, V. Griskevicius, & P. Williams (Eds.), *NA – advances in consumer research* (Vol. *45*, pp. 387–393). Duluth, MN.

Bee, C. (2021). The civic and political participation of young people in a context of heightened authoritarianism. The case of Turkey. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *24*(1), 40–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2019.1683523

Bellino, M. E., & Adams, J. D. (2017). A critical urban environmental pedagogy: Relevant urban environmental education for and by youth. *Journal of Environmental Education*, *48*(4), 270–284. https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2017.1336976

Elwood, S., & Mitchell, K. (2012). Mapping children's politics: spatial stories, dialogic relations and political formation. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, *94*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0467.2012.00392.x

Firinci Orman, T. (2022a). Youth's everyday environmental citizenship: An analytical framework for studying interpretive agency. *Childhood*, *29*(4), 495–511. https://doi.org/10.1177/09075682221107750

Firinci Orman, T. (2022b). A society-centric approach to child rights governance in the EU context: How to strengthen the political presence and participation of children? *Children's Geographies*, *20*(5), 633–647. https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2021.1949435

Habashi, J. (2017). *Political socialization of youth: A Palestinian case study*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Häkli, J., & Kallio, K. P. (2018). Theorizing Children's political agency. In T. Skelton & S. Aitken (Eds.), *Establishing geographies of children and young people. Geographies of children and young people* (Vol. *1*, pp. 1–13). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4585-88-0_1-1

Hobson, K. (2013). On the making of the environmental citizen. *Environmental Politics*, *22*(1), 56–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2013.755388

Isin, E. (2019). Doing rights with things: The art of becoming citizens. In P. Hildebrandt, K. Evert, & S. Peters (Eds.), *Performing citizenship: Bodies, agencies, limitations* (pp. 45–56). Palgrave Macmillan.

Isin, E. F. (2008). Theorising acts of citizenship. In E. F. Isin & G. M. Neilsen (Eds.), *Acts of citizenship* (pp. 15–43). Zed Books.

Isin, E. F. (2009). Citizenship in flux: The figure of the activist citizen. *Subjectivities*, *29*, 367–388. https://doi.org/10.1057/sub.2009.25

Izberk-Bilgin, E. (2010). Lifting the veil on infidel brands: Islamist discourses of Anticonsumerism. In M. C. Campbell, J. Inman, & R. Pieters (Eds.), *NA – advances in consumer research* (Vol. *37*, pp. 686–687). Duluth, MN.

Joronen, M. (2016). Politics of being–related: On onto–topologies and coming events. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, *98*(2), 97–107. https://doi.org/10.1111/geob.12093

Kallio, H. P. (2018a). Citizen-subject formation as geosocialization: A methodological approach on "learning to be citizens". *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, *100*(2), 81–96. https://doi.org/10.1080/04353684.2017.1390776

Kallio, K. (2014). Rethinking spatial socialization as a dynamic and relational process of political becoming. *Global Studies of Childhood*, *4*(3), 210–223. https://doi.org/10.2304/gsch.2014.4.3.2

Kallio, K. (2016). Becoming geopolitical in the everyday world. In M. Benwell & P. Hopkins (Eds.), *Children, young people and critical geopolitics* (pp. 169–186). Routledge.

Kallio, K., & Häkli, J. (2017). Geosocial lives in topological polis: Mohamed Bouazizi as a political agent. *Geopolitics*, *22*(1), 91–109. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2016.1208654

Kallio, K. P. (2018b). Exploring space and politics with children: A geosocial methodological approach to studying experiential worlds. In A. Cutter-Mackenzie, K. Malone, & E. Barratt Hacking (Eds.), *Research handbook on Childhoodnature*. Springer International Handbooks of Education: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51949-4_125-1

Kallio, K. P. (2021). Topological mapping: Studying Children's experiential worlds through spatial narratives. In L. Moran, K. Reilly, & B. Brady (Eds.), *Narrating childhood with children and young people: Diverse contexts, methods and stories of everyday life*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55647-1_14

Kallio, K. P., Häkli, J., & Bäcklund, S. P. M. (2015). Lived citizenship as the locus of political agency in participatory policy. *Citizenship Studies*, *19*(1), 101–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2014.982447

Kallio, K. P., & Mills, S. (Eds.). (2016). *Politics, citizenship and rights (geographies of children and young people) (Vol. 7)*. Springer.

Kallio, K. P., Wood, B. E., & Häkli, J. (2020). Lived citizenship: Conceptualising an emerging field. *Citizenship Studies*, *24*(6), 713–729. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2020.1739227

Kovách, I., Megyesi, B. G., Barthes, A., Oral, H. V., & Smederevac-Lalic, M. (2021). Knowledge use in education for environmental citizenship—Results of four case studies in Europe (France, Hungary, Serbia, Turkey). *Sustainability*, *13*(19), 11118. https://doi.org/10.3390/su131911118

Lister, R. (2008). Unpacking children's citizenship. In A. Invernizzi & J. Williams (Eds.), *Children and citizenship* (pp. 9–19). Sage.

Lister, R., Smith, N., Middleton, S., & Cox, L. (2003). Young people talk about citizenship: Empirical perspectives on theoretical and political debates. *Citizenship Studies*, *7*(2), 235–253. https://doi.org/10.1080/1362102032 000065991

Lüküslü, D. (2016). Creating a pious generation: youth and education policies of the AKP in Turkey. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, *16*(4), 637–649. https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2016.1243332

MEB. (2022) 'Environment education and climate change curriculum is completed'. Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education. Available at: https://meb.gov.tr/environment-education-and-climate-change-curri culum-is-completed/haber/25946/en

Neas, S., Ward, A., & Bowman, B. (2022). Young people's climate activism: A review of the literature. *Frontiers in Political Science*, *4*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.940876

Olsson, Å. (2017). Children's lived citizenship: A study on children's everyday knowledge of injury risks and safety. *Childhood*, *24*(4), 545–558. https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568217718

Oral, H. V., Eren, O., Yay, A. S. E., Cermik, E., Kara, H. A., & Saygin, H. (2022). A closer look at the transition in environmental citizenship perception among K-12 students. *Research Square*, *23*, 3638–3652. https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-1697800/v1

Öz-Aydın, S., Ekersoy, S., & ve Özkan, B. (2022). Türkiye'de eğitim öğretim programları, çevre okuryazarlığının gerçekleştirilmesini ne kadar desteklemektedir? *Yaşadıkça Eğitim [Education as we Live]*, *36*(1), 66–89. https://doi.org/10.33308/26674874.2022361354

Percy-Smith, B. (2015). Negotiating active citizenship: Young people's participation in everyday spaces. In K. P. Kallio & S. Mills (Eds.), *Geographies of children and young people (Vol. 7): Politics, citizenship and rights* (Vol. 7, pp. 401–422). Springer.

Sandikci, O., Ekici, A., & Tari, B. (2006). Consumer acculturation as a dialogical process: Case studies from rural-to-urban migrants in Turkey. In C. Pechmann & L. Price (Eds.), *NA – advances in consumer research* (Vol. *33*, pp. 429–434). Association for Consumer Research.

Ustuner, T., & Holt, D. B. (2010). Toward a theory of status consumption in less industrialized countries. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *37*(1), 37–56.

Walther, A., Lüküslü, D. G., Loncle, P., & Pais, A. (2020). Regimes of youth participation? Comparative analysis of youth policies and participation across European cities. *Young*, *29*(2), 191–209. https://doi.org/10.1177/11033 08820937

Wood, B. E. (2010). Youth participation in society: Everyday citizenship perspectives from young people in New Zealand. *New Zealand Sociology*, *25*(2), 103–124.

Yabanci, B. (2021). Work for the Nation, Obey the State, Praise the Ummah: Turkey's Government-oriented Youth Organizations in Cultivating a New Nation. *Ethnopolitics*, *20*(4), 467–499. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449 057.2019.1676536

Yuval-Davis, N. (2015). Situated intersectionality and social inequality. *Raisons Politiques*, *58*, 91–100. https://doi.org/10.3917/rai.058.0091

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Turkan Firinci Orman is a member of Department of Design in Aalto University, Finland. She also holds an associate professorship in sociology assigned by the Turkish Inter-universities Board in 2018. For more than a decade, she has been doing research and teaching in childhood studies and acted as a consultant in various educational projects that include young people. She has published widely on topics such as youth political agency, children's rights and participatory design with children.

Seran Demiral is a fiction writer and philosophy for children trainer, as well as a scholar in social sciences, whose studies focus on the subjectivities of children and young people and their collective cultures, particularly in digital environments. She also teaches children's literature at Boğaziçi University as a part-time lecturer.