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Chapter Two

Reconfiguring Modernity, Secularism, and Citizenship through Place-Making

In this chapter, I develop the theoretical framework that grounds my approach to post-secular modernity as a political project. I introduce the conceptual lens of place-making to intervene in scholarly debates on modernity, citizenship, and the state. This approach draws attention to how post-secular modernity unfolds in the textures of everyday life – through the spaces, routines, and relationships in which political ideals are materialised and negotiated. The first part introduces scholarship on the contestations of secular modernity, focusing on three interrelated bodies of literature: postcolonial critiques of secular modernity, multiple modernities, and post-secular modernity. The second part focuses on the literatures of the anthropology of state and citizenship, where the formation of state and citizens is explored as something enacted through everyday practices. The final part illustrates how and why I use the lens of place-making to examine the formation of state and citizen as part of the AKP's political project.

Contesting the 'Secular' in Modernity

Debates on modernity – ranging from Marx and Engels (2015 [1848]) to Gramsci (2000) and from Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) to Foucault (1995), alongside many other foundational thinkers in the social sciences – have centred on understanding a transformative shift: the emergence of a society fundamentally different from what preceded it, whether said society was described as feudal, traditional, or grounded in sovereign power. Writing in the industrial era, Marx (2015) envisioned the eventual overthrow of capitalism by the proletariat. Decades later, as modernisation became more deeply entrenched and widespread, Gramsci (2000) sought to understand why revolution had failed in Europe – despite its success in Russia – and had, instead, culminated in mass support for Mussolini in Italy. What began as a hopeful inquiry into social transformation gradually shifted towards pessimism in the work of Adorno and Horkheimer (2002). For them, modernity signified not liberation but society's submission to the disciplinary structures of the state. The question of freedom, once central for early Marxists, no longer seemed viable.

Taken together, these foundational debates show that 'the idea of modernity is the belief that everything is destined to be sped up, dissolved, displaced, transformed, reshaped' (Hall, 1992, p. 15). Emphasising this condition of 'perpetual disintegration and renewal' (Berman, 2010, p. 15), I approach modernity as an ongoing project of material and social transformation – one that asserts its novelty by dismantling the forms of life and modes of development that came before it. In particular, I problematise secular modernity and its discontents, showing how decisions about what should be destroyed, renewed, or preserved depend on the political projects at stake.

Rooted in Enlightenment ideals, the secular nature of modernity is often defined by a break from the dominance of religious authorities in shaping

political regimes, states, societies, and spaces (Mitchell, 2000). While this break represents freedom for some, it has meant exclusion or marginalisation for others. In this context, the ideal of secular modernity has faced resistance from religiously identified groups across various contexts. The Islamic Revolution in Iran (1978) and the Taliban's recent return to power in Afghanistan (2021) are two prominent examples. These movements often seek to reestablish religion as the central organising force of society, frequently by pursuing control of the state, whether through democratic processes or other means.

I interpret such movements as political projects that challenge secular modernity. However, rather than viewing secular and counter-secular modernities as binary opposites, I understand these emerging projects as dialectical responses – critiques of their predecessors that also contain elements of continuity, leading to new visions of modernity. In this context, I engage with three scholarly debates that inform my analysis: postcolonial critiques of secular modernity, multiple modernities, and post-secular modernity.

The first debate centres on the postcolonial critique of secular modernity. Talal Asad's (2003) influential work on the anthropology of secularism has been foundational in critically examining modernity. He approaches modernity as a 'political economic project' aimed at institutionalising 'a number of (sometimes conflicting, often evolving) principles: constitutionalism, moral autonomy, democracy, human rights, civil equality, industry, consumerism, freedom of the market – and secularism' (p. 13). By viewing modernity as a project rather than a normative stance, Asad questions the binary construction of the secular and the religious as necessary conditions for modernity, especially the expectation that non-Western regions should follow this path. This perspective allows for an examination of modernity as a 'political goal' with specific conditions and consequences for the populations upon which it is imposed.

Asad deconstructs the association between modernity and secularism by analysing literary, historical, and religious texts from Western Europe – where secularism was politically institutionalised – and colonial Egypt, where secularism was expected to be embraced. For instance, he interprets the Sharia reforms in late 19th- and early 20th-century Egypt as both a precondition and a consequence of modern state-building under English colonial influence. These reforms did not fully conform to European secular ideals, as they permitted religion to continue to exert moral influence on citizens while modernising the state by containing religion within a separate, state-governed sphere.

Mitchell (2000) expands on the idea of modernity as a project by framing it as the 'capitalist modernity' of the West, which always requires an 'other' to assert its distinction as the only true form of modernity. He emphasises its constructed nature as a representation of the West, noting that colonial projects of modernity in non-Western regions have never fully replicated Western modernity. Instead, there have always been elements of 'displacement, deferral, and delay in the production of the modern' (p. 23), which the West overlooks to assert its own difference.

I draw on Asad's and Mitchell's conceptualisations of modernity as a project to discuss different constructions of modernity that serve distinct political goals. Both the secular modernity project of the Republican elite in early 20th-century Turkey and the post-secular modernity project of the Islamist movement in the late 20th century have engaged with Western secular modernity, albeit in opposing ways. The postcolonial critique of the West's need for an 'other' to define itself helps to frame the latter modernity project not simply as a stance against secularity but as the 'other' through which post-secular modernity claims its distinctiveness. In other words, the post-secular modernity of the Islamist movement becomes possible only by challenging the 'distinctive sensibilities, aesthetics, [and] moralities' (Asad, 2003, p. 14) of the earlier secular modernity project.

The second debate, on multiple modernities, builds on the postcolonial critique of the binary opposition between modernity and religion, aiming to explore how such binary constructions can actively shape alternative forms of modernity that diverge from the Western model. Eisenstadt (2000), a leading theorist of this approach, argues that modernity and Westernisation are not synonymous and that modernity takes diverse forms in various cultural contexts. While acknowledging modernity's origins in the West, he contends that, as it spreads, it undergoes 'continuous selection, reinterpretation, and reformulation' (p. 15) by different cultures. Eisenstadt views movements such as communism and Islamist fundamentalism as distinct interpretations of modernity that reappropriate and redefine its discourse on their own terms.

Building on this idea, Lara Deeb (2006) introduces the term 'enchanted modern' to describe how pious Shi'i Muslim women in Lebanon blend piety and modernity in their everyday lives. Deeb focuses on how individuals define what it means to be modern, revealing that material progress (often associated with Western rationality) and spiritual progress (often excluded from it) can, in fact, coexist. Similarly, Bracke (2008) illustrates this concept through an ethnographic study in the Netherlands, examining how Christian and Islamic women's engagement with scripture has led to a new understanding of religion that diverges from their parents' generation. This study reveals a 'historically novel disarticulation between the modern and the secular' as respondents assert modernity confidently as part of their religious worldview (2008, p. 59).

In this literature, Ong (1999) brings attention to Asian modernities, which do not necessarily present an alternative to capitalist modernity and may even aim to extend influence over other regions, similar to Western modernity. She demonstrates, for example, how Chinese nativist ideologies are intertwined with capitalism in China to shape an alternative Asian modernity. While these forms may be perceived as resisting Western dominance, Ong warns that 'emergent Chinese modernity can enact a cultural hegemony that instills alarm and resistance elsewhere in the Asia Pacific region' (p. 73). Thus,

for her, it is crucial to ask 'who controls that which is signified as modern' (p. 72). Ong's work highlights that alternative modernities are not always empowering or liberatory, which contrasts with the perspectives offered by Deeb (2006) and Bracke (2008).

In my analysis of the transformation of secular modernity within the political project of the Islamist movement, I adopt the ontological approach of multiple modernities. However, rather than associating the multiple forms of modernity with cultural differences alone, I frame them as distinct political projects with competing visions for Turkey. This approach allows for an understanding of how cultural differences are mobilised for political objectives. Importantly, I echo Ong's (1999) caution against uncritically viewing alternative modernities as emancipatory and thus examine the new form of modernity as a political project that includes both coercive and consensual elements.

The third debate I engage with is that of post-secularity, which is closely intertwined with the concept of multiple modernities. Post-secularity has been developed as a normative category that acknowledges religious ways of life in contemporary times and invites reflective consideration for both believing and non-believing citizens in their political interactions (Habermas, 2006). Rosati and Stoeckl (2012) emphasise that post-secular society is grounded in the recognition of multiple modernities (p. 8). Accordingly, post-secularity is one of the multiple forms of modernity. Rather than rejecting secular frameworks, post-secularity highlights both the limitations of the secularisation thesis (Molendijk et al., 2010) and the reflexive continuity of it by accepting possibilities that diverge radically from secular norms (Rosati & Stoeckl, 2012). In this view, the interplay between secular and religious perspectives, where both learn from each other and maintain an ongoing dialogue to generate new ways of relating, is central to post-secular debates (Beaumont et al., 2020).

Much of the research in post-secular literature has focused on cities in Western Europe, examining spaces where religious groups engage in

practices ranging from worship to social care (Williams, 2015). Studies on faith-based organisations highlight their role in providing care, welfare, and justice for marginalised individuals and groups within the city (Cloke & Beaumont, 2013, p. 45). These studies illustrate a 'postsecular rapprochement', emphasising collaboration across religious and secular divides for common causes (Cloke, 2010).

Discussions of post-secularity in non-Western contexts remain limited. Edited books and volumes on post-secularity include only a few case studies from non-Western regions, such as China, where secularism was introduced as a state project, and where religion later re-emerged as an alternative worldview among minority groups (Gao et al., 2018; Qian & Kong, 2018). Importantly, these studies tend to mirror the post-secular trajectory in the West, as religious groups' assertions of difference do not fundamentally challenge the dominance of secular lifestyles.

In contrast, there are states where religion plays an important role in the lives of the majority while the state itself maintains a secular structure. Examples include Turkey, India, Pakistan, and pre-revolutionary Iran. In each of these cases, the state implemented top-down secular reforms, which often led to opposition from religious segments of society. The key difference between these cases and other post-secular examples in Northern Europe lies in the transformation of the secular structure of the state and society in these cases. Theoretical debates on post-secularity, as noted above, generally do not consider the possibility of religious groups influencing the secular structure of the state, as seen in cases such as Iran. In other words, discussions of post-secularity are often shaped by contexts where religiosity is practised by a minority rather than by powerful majority groups actively influencing state secularism.

Against the dominance of religious-minority contexts in post-secularity discussions, Turkey has been highlighted as an 'interesting' and 'complex' example of a post-secular society (Rosati, 2012). Nilüfer Göle, a pioneering

Turkish sociologist, was among the first to discuss the emerging post-secular society in Turkey. By examining the everyday experiences of Islamic groups in various spheres, such as veiled students in universities and Islamic consumption practices, Göle argues that the Islamist movement in the 1990s exemplified a 'cross-fertilization of Islam and modernity' (2000, p. 95), representing 'a manifest assault on the secular definition of the public sphere and an attempt to recuperate that element of corporal regulation' (2000, p. 115). A decade later, with the AKP in power, Göle interpreted Erdoğan and the AKP as a 'post-secular experience … going beyond the [secular and religious] divide and searching for new articulations that will not lead to exclusionary practices' (2012, p. 10). While Göle saw the AKP as sustaining a blend of secular and religious worlds to promote pluralism, she cautioned that there was always the risk of 'totalitarianism or the tyranny of the majority' (ibid.). In her view, the AKP was a marginal actor that could create conditions for a post-secular society where secular and religious groups could engage in a productive dialogue. However, similar to Ong (1999), she carefully underscores the illiberal possibilities inherent in this process.

Drawing on Göle and more recent studies on post-secular Turkey (Rosati, 2015; Gökarıksel & Secor, 2015; Altınordu, 2021), I approach post-secularity not as a normative and ethical characteristic of society but as a political project of a specific government that seeks to reshape the state and society to align with the country's dominant religion. This perspective not only introduces a different empirical context but also invites us to reconsider key assumptions of post-secular theory, particularly its emphasis on pluralistic societies in which diverse religious groups and non-believers are expected to learn from one another and reflect this mutual understanding in their social interactions. For instance, Gökarıksel and Secor's (2015) research on the everyday geopolitics of post-secularism among devout Muslim women in Istanbul emphasises that a pluralistic public sphere has not been realised in Turkey, as opposed to the assumptions of post-secular theory. Instead, they argue, people contend with the demands of post-secularism, resulting in a public

sphere 'that is necessarily contested, uneven, and riven with contradictions and diverse viewpoints' (Gökarıksel & Secor, 2015, p. 28).

In my conceptualisation of post-secular modernity, the prefix 'post-' plays a crucial role. Rather than adopting terms such as 'de-secular' or 'religious modernity', which emphasise a radical break from the secular, I underscore the continuities with earlier projects of secular modernity – particularly the state's continued regulation of religion and its reliance on non-coercive mechanisms to shape religious adherence. However, the term also signals a significant discontinuity: the de-privatisation of religion, which seeks to legitimise religious ways of life within a Muslim-majority society. As such, the prefix 'post-' allows us to consider the dialectical relationship between the former and the latter, through which new practices – and possibilities that extend beyond the confines of the AKP's political project – can emerge. This stance allows me to account for societal disputes, challenges, and negotiations around religious ways of life that may conflict with the AKP's vision of post-secularity. In this way, my contribution to the post-secular modernity debate is to demonstrate its establishment as a political project and to reveal the contestations it generates among religious sectors of society. This is especially the case when it comes to gender norms: while the vision of post-secularity has opened space for religious women's participation in the public sphere, the AKP's broader political project simultaneously embraces a conservative understanding of gender and family that does not necessarily align with post-secular ideals. In this sense, my research illuminates the emergent tensions that unfold within the gap between the AKP's broader political project and post-secularity as a process enacted in everyday spaces that extend beyond the party's control.

Making of the State and Citizen

To illuminate the political project of the AKP, I examine how a particular vision of the state and the 'good citizen' is enacted, negotiated, and contested

in daily life. Hegemonic political projects – whether secular or post-secular – (often) promote specific ideas and practices of statehood and citizenship. When political actors come to power, they project their ideologies by establishing institutions, policies, and infrastructure, embedding state authority and ideology in everyday life (Painter, 2006). Along with institutionalising an idea of the state, governments also prioritise certain types of citizens that embody their favoured values, norms, and moralities, aligning with their political agenda (De Koning et al., 2015). To analyse how the AKP's project reshapes notions of state and citizenship in Turkey – and how these notions are contested – I draw on anthropological and geographical perspectives on statecraft and citizenship.

Anthropological debates on the state examine how the abstract idea of the state manifests in daily practices and interactions among individuals and groups (Sharma & Gupta, 2006). Building on Abrams's concept of the state as an idea (1988) and Mitchell's understanding of the state as an effect (1999), Painter (2006) contends that stateness is 'actualized in countless mundane social and material practices within and outside the institutions conventionally referred to as the state apparatus' (p. 771). One important component of the image of the state in these debates concerns its emotional and affective dimensions. By viewing 'the state as the object of emotional investment' (Laszczkowski & Reeves, 2015, p. 3), these scholars treat 'citizens' imaginations and projections of the state' (Andreetta et al., 2022, p. 5) as essential to understanding state formation. They argue that 'the state acquires a tangible, affective, and spatial reality' (Laszczkowski & Reeves, 2015, p. 6), particularly through ordinary citizens' feelings, emotions, and embodied responses to political processes in relation to the state (p. 7).

Building on these anthropological debates of statehood, I focus on how the state becomes a political authority for citizens – a key goal of hegemonic projects – in emotional and affective terms. The ways in which the state is shaped by citizens as a political authority in emotional and affective terms can be seen, for instance, in how ordinary people refer to Mao as 'My Old

Man', a kinship metaphor expressing the respect Chinese citizens feel for Mao (Steinmüller, 2015). In this process of associating the state with certain emotions and affects, particular actors play a mediating role, such as state bureaucrats, political parties, trade unions, and religious organisations (Gupta, 1995; Lipsky, 2010 [1980]; Jones, 2012; Koster & Van Leynseele, 2018; McGregor & Chatiza, 2020). As Vollebergh and colleagues (2021) demonstrate in their research on the 'affect-laden techniques' (p. 750) employed by parenting support professionals and volunteers in various European cities, these mediating actors help produce perceptions of the state based on 'good feelings and noncommercialized social bonds' (p. 749). Similarly, I am interested in how the state under the AKP governments comes to evoke 'a sense of closeness and intimacy' (Vollebergh et al., 2021, p. 747) among citizens.

This approach to studying the state differs from instrumental explanations of state–society relations, particularly the conceptualisation of clientelism. For instance, focusing on Zimbabwe, McGregor and Chatiza (2020) analyse political party loyalty as a mechanism for obtaining substantive entitlements in illiberal democracies, both within and beyond Africa. They demonstrate that 'party political affiliation matters for access to resources and protection' (p. 33), as access to urban amenities is often provided exclusively to party supporters, and show how this is framed by the party as an act of generosity rather than a guaranteed right. Without contesting the undemocratic nature of construing citizenship rights as generosity, I shift the analytical focus to what it means to affectively charge the state (Andreetta et al., 2022) – whether in perceiving such rights as acts of generosity by the state or in citizens remembering Mao as their 'Old Man' (Steinmüller, 2015).

In explaining how the 'good citizen' is constituted within the AKP's political project, I draw on debates on substantive citizenship and citizenship agendas. According to scholars of substantive citizenship, formal citizenship – defined by rights and duties tied to state membership – does not always reflect the lived experiences and material interactions between citizens and the state. For

instance, although public demonstrations are legally restricted[17] in Turkey, grassroots organisations continue to protest, yet only opposition groups typically face arrest. Such discrepancies are highlighted by Holston and Appadurai (1999), who distinguish between formal and substantive citizenship: while formal citizenship denotes membership in the state, substantive citizenship refers to 'the array of civil, political, socioeconomic, and cultural rights people possess and exercise' (p. 4), thereby revealing social inequalities. Through this substantive dimension, 'meanings and practices of belonging in society' (p. 14) transcend formal membership, incorporating 'moral and performative' (ibid.) aspects. This substantive approach to citizenship enables an understanding of how post-secular modernity is reflected in the construction of the ideal citizen under the AKP's political project, even though, in principle, all citizens should be equal regardless of their adherence to a particular political ideal.

De Koning and colleagues take this discussion further by framing substantive citizenship through the concept of citizenship agendas, which they define as 'normative framings of citizenship that prescribe what norms, values, and behavior are appropriate' (2015, p. 121). To understand how the state envisions 'good citizenship' and enacts this vision within its post-secular modernity project, I focus on these 'normative articulations of citizenship' (p. 125). Accordingly, I examine how religious morality and conservative gender norms – central elements of 'good citizenship' within the AKP's political project – are embodied, enacted, and contested in citizens' everyday lives. While existing literature often associates everyday citizenship with migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees (e.g. Zuntz & Columbu, 2024), I shift the focus to established Turkish citizens whose legal status has never been in question, yet whose moral values and behaviours have become central to the AKP's post-secular modernity agenda. This approach allows for an understanding

17 According to the law, demonstrations are allowed. However, when the subject of these demonstrations conflict with the AKP's vision, they often face restrictions, such as the demonstration being banned the day before due to public safety.

of how the notion of the 'good citizen' is reshaped through daily life in alignment with Islamic morality and conservative gender norms.

In my approach to the normative underpinnings of citizenship, I trace how visions of the 'good citizen' are 'being proposed (framed, invoked), not imposed' (Pykett et al., 2010, p. 534). In other words, I examine what constitutes a good citizen within the AKP's political project and how these ideals are negotiated and embodied in everyday life. In this sense, I follow Frossard's (2021) focus on the 'shared normative horizons' of good citizenship that link otherwise opposed social groups in the making of the good citizen – horizons that are often 'taken for granted or left implicit' (p. 40) when compared to the more visible renderings of bad citizenship. My approach therefore engages not primarily with the punitive and coercive dimensions of normative citizenship – against which the citizenship literature often highlights 'acts of citizenship' (Işın, 2008) as forms of resistance – but rather with the affective and consensual mechanisms through which citizens internalise and reproduce these normative visions. By examining what defines the good citizen and how these ideals are internalised, I aim to illuminate the productive dimensions of hegemonic projects and the kinds of citizen-subjects they generate.

Place-Making: A Conceptual Lens

In order to understand how citizenry and statehood are shaped within the hegemonic project of the AKP, I use place-making as a central conceptual lens. Place-making helps us capture both the translation of political ideals to tangible environments (i.e. the formation of places in line with post-secular modernity) and how, in turn, these environments, encompassing physical, discursive, and sensory dimensions, shape specific political ideas (i.e. the formation of the idea of the state and citizen-subject in line with the post-secular places). This approach to place-making is largely informed by the concept's analytical use in geography and anthropology rather than in planning studies, where place-making is used as a planning tool and to increase

community participation in shaping places (Fleming, 2007; PPS, 2007; Thomas, 2016). In short, I use place-making as a lens to observe how political transformations are materialised through lived experience (Friedmann, 2007).

In this section, I discuss two key dimensions of place-making that underpin my conceptual framework: relational and processual dimensions. I contend that place-making, as a continuous *process* mediating between tangible environments and political ideas in a *relational* manner, not only illustrates how political ideas are formed but also highlights how they may be contested.

The relational and processual dimensions of place-making highlight the construction of social connections in and through place as an ongoing, evolving process. Massey (2005), a leading scholar on the relationality of place, argues that 'places pose, in highly variable form, the question of our living together in the sense of juxtaposition (throwntogetherness)' (p. 187). She further suggests that places 'implicate us, perforce, in the lives of human others, and in our relations with nonhumans they ask how we shall respond to our temporary meeting-up with these particular rocks and stones and trees' (p. 141). By placing the question of 'living together' at the centre of debates on place, Massey conceptualises place as the 'sum of our relations and interconnections' (p. 184). This perspective underscores that, as we construct meaningful places to live – from homes to neighbourhoods – together with others and the material world, those material environments simultaneously shape identities, norms, and values. In other words, the relationship between social relations and material environments is a reciprocal and interdependent process.

In emphasising the processual dimension of place-making, I refer to the long-term socio-spatial changes that are 'dynamic in nature, as unfolding, ongoing processes rather than as static ties among inert substances' (Emirbayer, 1997, p. 289). I conceptualise place-making practices that enact hegemonic projects as continuous attempts to construct and reconstruct political ideas of statehood and citizenry. Here, the notion of 'attempt' is crucial, as it signifies

both intentionality and incompleteness, allowing for the evolution of these efforts along various trajectories. This emphasis enables me to interpret the political project of the AKP not as a finished entity but as something in a state of 'becoming'.

For instance, in the context of material environments created from scratch – such as TOKİ social housing – these projects remain far from complete. While the initial buildings and amenities mark the beginning of place-making, political ideas do not materialise autonomously within such spaces. Instead, the ongoing efforts of individuals, collectives, and institutions to embed political ideas in these spaces form an integral part of the place-making process. Thus, place-making is inherently an ongoing and dynamic process.

In my understanding of the relational dimension of place-making, I refer to the two-way relationship between subjects and environment: (1) how subjects shape environments, and (2) how environments shape subjects.

The first aspect involves the production of spaces through which individuals and groups inscribe their ways of living (e.g. norms, values, morals, ideologies) into place by explicit (e.g. religious symbols) and implicit (e.g. emotional associations) ways. From the state's planning of a social housing estate to residents' transformation of vacant land into a community space, place-making practices reflect visions of how we aspire to live together with others. These decisions are inherently political: prioritising social housing over private developments may signify a welfare-oriented state, while opting for a community space instead of a mosque or shopping mall may indicate a preference for fostering bonds among co-locals that are not centred on religion or consumption.

Especially in cases involving disputes over land use or the creation of spaces that sharply contrast with one another, grassroots, anti-capitalist, and anti-authoritarian spatial practices opposing the visions of the market and the state have become some of the most influential topics in place-making

debates (e.g. Feola et al., 2023; Van Neste & Martin, 2017; Keenan, 2025; Poppe & Young, 2015). However, contestations do not only occur in such clearly opposed groups. In other words, within seemingly coherent groups, there might be different visions of place as well. Bodirsky's (2017) theoretical discussion of 'contested place-making' is one of the few exceptions that highlights this aspect. She emphasises the 'multiple lines of division beyond the question of allegiance to use or exchange value' (p. 677), which can reveal differing visions of place among users. A sensitivity to different visions of place even among the seemingly homogeneous groups, may, thus, enable us to observe tensions within the same political ideal.

Along with contestation, place-making may take more subtle forms in racialised and gendered contexts, often operating within dominant power structures. Allen and colleagues (2019) highlight 'black articulations of place', which centre on unique Black senses and poetics of place. These practices, while less overt, reveal long-term racial tensions embedded in place-making rather than singular, active conflicts (p. 1013). Similarly, Dycke's (2005) research on women's everyday care work and Van Eck's (2022) study of outdoor retail markets show that place-making is rooted in 'fears, hopes, and dreams' (Dycke, 2005, p. 241), highlighting its embodied, performative, and affective dimensions. Drawing on such racialised and gendered accounts of place-making, I consider emotions, narratives, interactions, beliefs, norms, and embodiments, which imbue places with meanings, as part of place-making. In other words, I examine the subtle, non-material practices of place-making alongside the more explicit, material ones.

The second aspect of relational place-making focuses on how places shape subjectivities, morals, norms, and political affiliations. While much of the literature emphasises the first aspect – the ways individuals create places – the reciprocal influence of places on social relations and individuals remains less explored. Blokland (2008), referencing Massey and Dixon & Durrheim, explicitly addresses this dimension, noting that 'people not only make places as articulations of social relationships [...] but through placemaking

processes also create, renew, and restructure such relationships' (p. 32). For instance, she examines neighbourhood stigmatisation as a place-making practice through which residents of a particular area become stigmatised by broader society. Similarly, Leitner and colleagues (2008) emphasise how the materiality of environments – including infrastructure, urban layouts, and public spaces – 'regulates and mediates social relations and daily routines within a place' (p. 161).

Complementing the conceptual discussions of Blokland (2008) and Leitner et al. (2008), scholars have emphasised the role of places in shaping certain cultural and sexual identities (Brown-Saracino, 2018; Shaker et al., 2021; Silver & Clark 2016; Pinkster, 2016; Van Gent et al., 2023) and political affiliations (Cramer, 2016; Hochschild, 2016; Ternullo, 2024). Although using a different term than place-making – namely scenescapes – Silver and Clark (2016) focus on how the articulation of certain amenities (e.g. churches, bakeries) shape a place in line with certain cultural profiles (e.g. neo-Bohemian, neighbourly). Similarly, Brown-Saracino (2018) discusses 'how cities shape us' (p. 7) by looking at the lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) residents' changing 'sense of self and orientation to neighbors' (p. 14) when they move to a new city. She argues that 'these migrants come to take on some of the shape of the city; they stretch to fit its profile' (p. 16), which corresponds to the distinct sexual identity cultures. A sensitivity to a place's implication on the subjectivity of residents may, thus, enable us to observe the ways in which certain compositions of place might enact certain citizen-subjects whose norms, morals, and ideals are in line with certain political projects. This will also show how the various subjects respond – embody, negotiate, and resist – to what a political project defines as the appropriate one.

Some scholars explicitly focus on the role of place in shaping political affiliations (Cramer, 2016; Hochschild, 2016; Ternullo, 2024). Cramer's (2016) research on the ways in which people make sense of politics in the US points to the rural–urban divide as an important spatial determinant for party affiliation. She argues that rural residents resent the urban ones because of

unfair distribution policies and tend to empathise with politicians who are like them. Hochschild (2016) finds a similar resentment, this time expressed against the racial minorities in the southern states of the US and resulting in the increasing appeal of Republicans in those states. Ternullo's (2024) recent study about the shifts in the regional political preferences in three cities of the US links place and political preference more directly by coining the term place-based partisanship. She argues that the way people solve their problems (diagnostic frames) and how they define themselves (narratives of community identity) are at the centre of the formation of political identity and that these aspects highly depend on place-based relations and conditions. More specifically, such place-based relations provide residents with informal political knowledge, which then guide them to associate themselves with one political party over the other. These discussions on the role of place in shaping political identities are particularly helpful for understanding the ways in which place fosters affiliation to the AKP's hegemonic project. Following Cramer (2016) and Hochschild (2016), I focus on the emotions in political affiliation and examine how, in certain places, these emotions provide informal political knowledge for the interpretation of party politics, as emphasised by Ternullo (2024).

Digital platforms, long regarded as detached from questions of space and place, constitute another dimension of my analysis of place-making. Over the past two decades, scholars have increasingly examined how these platforms shape broader social and political dynamics – from their role in the mobilisation of social movements (Van Haperen et al., 2018) to the ways they influence our experience of urban life (Boy & Uitermark, 2024; Törnberg & Uitermark, 2025). For my research, the digital may contribute to the co-constitutive relationship between places and subjects by connecting individuals who may not share the same physical space, or who remain unaware of one another even when they do. In this regard, I consider digital platforms as playing an auxiliary yet significant role in the making of both places and subjects.