

The Art of Enacting the Impossible

A Conceptual, Empirical, and Methodological Exploration of Constructive Resistance by the Kurdish Movement in Turkey

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Abstract

The Kurdish movement in Turkey has since 2005 been trying to establish democratic autonomy, an overarching proposition for the reconstruction of the society from the bottom up, based on ideals of radical democracy, women's liberation, social ecology, communalism and more. This dissertation takes the current resistance of the Kurdish movement in the context of democratic autonomy as a starting point to deepen the empirical and conceptual insights on resistance as enacted alternatives ('constructive resistance'); the role of emotions in resistance; and the ways in which our understanding of resistance could inform research methods. During seven months of ethnographic fieldwork in Turkey's Kurdish region, I conducted participant observation with the Kurdish movement, and conducted semi-structured and informal interviews with Kurdish movement participants and related actors.

The Art of Enacting the Impossible is situated within the field of resistance studies, and views constructive resistance as a distinct form of resistance as subaltern acts from below with the aim to undermine power through enacted alternatives. Empirical investigations concerning this form of resistance in the context of the Kurdish movement in Turkey demonstrates that subaltern communities can realistically enact change in their everyday lives that otherwise could have been perceived as impossible.

This dissertation contributes to the field of resistance studies with new empirical and conceptual insights on constructive resistance as a distinct type of resistance, and the role in which emotions come into play in the articulations of this form of resistance, and the connections between forms of resistance and research methods. It also adds to the field of Kurdish studies with new empirical insights on some of the ongoing and civil forms of resistance by the Kurdish movement in the context of Democratic Autonomy.

Keywords: constructive resistance, emotional resistance, the Kurdish movement, democratic autonomy, ethnographic methods

- Article I** Koefoed, Minoo (forthcoming.): '8. Autonomous Spaces and Constructive Resistance in Northern Kurdistan: The Kurdish Movement and its Experiments with Democratic Autonomy' (forthcoming, Lexington Books)
- Article II** Koefoed, Minoo (2017): 'Constructive Resistance in Northern Kurdistan: Exploring the Peace, Development, and Resistance Nexus', *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 12:3, 39–53
- Article III** Koefoed, Minoo (2017): 'Martyrdom and Emotional Resistance in the Case of Northern Kurdistan: Hidden and Public Emotional Resistance', *Journal of Political Power*
- Article IV** Koefoed, Minoo (2017): 'When Doing Ethnography with Armed Movements: Participation, Rapport, Resistance – and Ethics', *Journal of Resistance Studies*, 3:2, 137–147
- Article V** Koefoed, Minoo (2017): 'Accessing the Backstage: Ethnographic Research Methods in Resistance Studies', *Journal of Resistance Studies*, 3:2, 19–41

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