

COLLOQUIUM

# ARGUING WITH NUMBERS

Quantification and its socio-political  
implications in contemporary Turkey

28th-29th September 2023

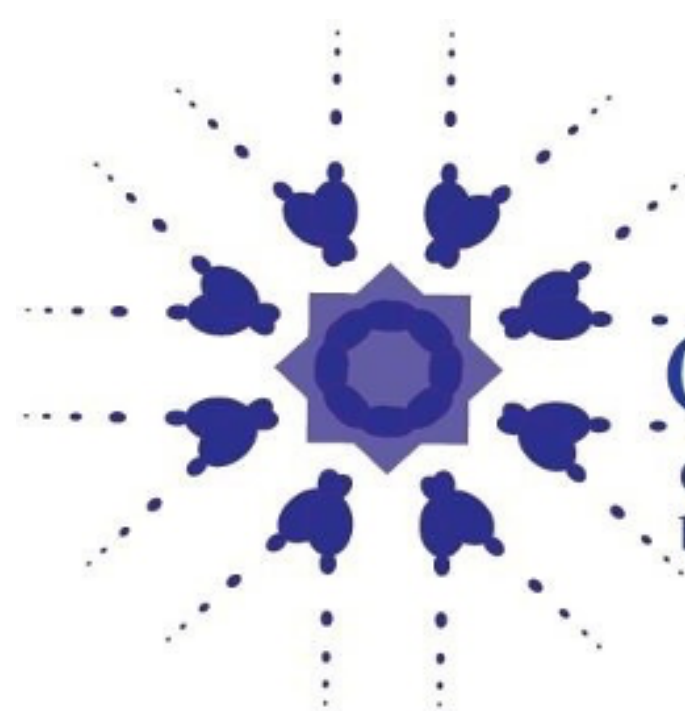


French Institute of Anatolian Studies  
& online

## PROGRAM



Institut Français  
d'Études Anatoliennes



CETOBaC

Centre d'études turques, ottomanes,  
balkaniques et centrasiatiques

# ARGUING WITH NUMBERS

This colloquium invites young researchers at all levels (master, doctorate, post-doctorate) to share original research about the uses of numbers and their socio-political implications in the Turkish context, past and present.

Numeric arguments are omnipresent in political discourse. As the time for Turkey's presidential election approaches in the aftermath of the seismic crisis, this observation may become even more relevant. Figures and estimates on key ballot issues are generated, disseminated, and interpreted by a complex body of interconnected actors: pollsters, scholars, think-tank members, political party advocates, and so forth. Inflation, for instance, is a daily topic in mainstream newspapers. The 'true' numbers of inflation are calculated by economists and then shared by journalists in the public arena where they become the subject of heated controversies in board-rooms, coffee shops, and at dinner-tables. Competitive statistical narratives also circulate as executives and ordinary people seek to make sense of current trends and likely future scenarios. As some narratives win out over others, certain public institutions have been brought into disrepute; whereas, conversely, private expertise companies have acquired new levels of credibility and trust.

By organizing this colloquium, we wish to build a springboard for importing and discussing the numerous studies dealing with the social history of statistics (see Anderson 1988, Desrosières 2010 [1993], 2008a; Didier 2000; Wuthnow 2015; Labbé 2019), the socio-political life of numbers in the public arena (see Schweyer 1991; Porter 2017 [1995]; Desrosières 2008b, 2014; Bruno, Didier & Prévieux 2014; Gasquet et al. 2021), and the renewal of quantitative methodologies and techniques in the academic field (see Bugeja-Bloch & Couto 2021) along with their impact on reframing theories (see Field 2019; Bréchon & Zwilling 2020) and shaping state policies (see Aldrin 2010). Research on quantification and the social life of numbers has been fruitful in many parts of the world but has not yet been well established in Turkey. This event represents an effort to advance a scholarly conversation about the Turkish case, including the social history of ottoman and republican censuses (see DüNDAR 2001, 2005), statistics in relation to technopolitics and institutional reform (see Silverstein 2020), and the sociology of the public opinion and market research industry (see Abadan-Unat 1991).

This colloquium aspires to focus on a twofold research axis. On the one hand, we intend to dissect the chain of production of statistical artifacts that we are likely to encounter in our respective research areas. This focus entails a genealogical endeavor. To prevent the risk of anachronism or teleology, we encourage pragmatist approaches that examine each step of the quantification process as a practical and contingent accomplishment. Chronological patterns should therefore be embedded with grounded accounts of quantification as a social activity undertaken by specific actors (interviewers, pollsters, statisticians...), integrated into various institutional networks (companies, think-tank, NGOs, administrations...), on particular objects (public opinion, social attitudes, political trends...), by relying on evolving techniques (sampling, questionnaire design, data collection...), and requiring a handful of aptitudes (counting, calculating, estimating, predicting...).

On the other hand, we wish to study the social life of statistical artifacts, narratives, and arguments inasmuch as they provide inputs for engaging in public controversies. What kind of public issues catalyze or magnetize statistical disputes within fields as various as, for instance, state policy, administration of religious affairs, or social movements? And how discourse and collective action are framed and reframed regarding competitive figures on controversial issues such as inflation, immigration, work-related accidents, natural hazards, or feminicides?

# ARGUING WITH NUMBERS

## Scientific committee

Emmanuel Didier (Research director in social sciences, CNRS, France)

Fuat Dünder (Professor in political science, TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Turkey)

Morgane Labbé (Research director in social sciences, EHESS, France)

Brian Silverstein (Associate professor of Anthropology, Arizona Center for Turkish Studies, University of Arizona, USA)

Claire Visier (Associate professor in political science, University of Rennes-1)

Dilek Yankaya (Associate professor in political science, Sciences Po Aix)

## Organizers



**Necati Mert Gümüş** is a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Aix-Marseille University (UMR7064 Mesopolhis) under the supervision of Dorota Dakowska and Claire Visier. His dissertation analyzes the role and use of participatory settings, policies, and discourse in the local politics and local governments of Turkey. His main research areas are Turkish politics, political systems, local public policies and participatory democracy.



**Théo Malçok** is a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at EHESS (UMR8032 CETOBaC) under the supervision of Nathalie Clayer and Patrick Michel. His dissertation aims to understand why and how the recognition of 'atheists' has become an issue of social and political struggles in contemporary Turkey.

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N.B. This colloquium follows up a round table on the role of polls in Turkish elections with the participation of Aydın Erdem from KONDA (Research and Consultancy). This event, organized by Yohanan Benhaim, Necati Mert Gümüş and Théo Malçok, will take place on Wednesday, September 27 between 18:00 and 20:00 at IFEA.

ROUND TABLE

## BEHIND THE NUMBERS

### POLLS IN TURKEY'S 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

27th September 2023, 6pm



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**AYDIN ERDEM**

Analyst at KONDA  
Research & Consultancy

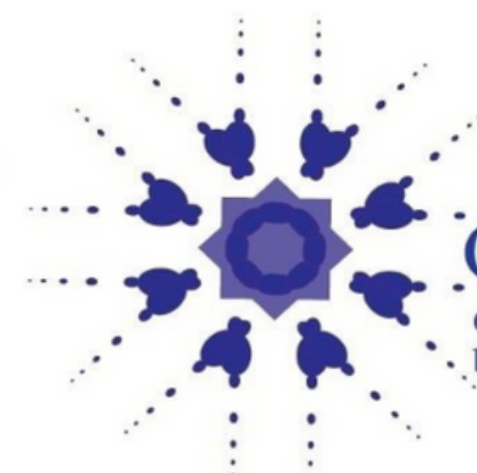
REGISTRATION : [IFEA-ISTANBUL.NET](https://ifea-istanbul.net)



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I I S M M



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# ARGUING WITH NUMBERS

DAY 1

Thursday, 28th September 2023

Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes, Istanbul

9:30-10:00

Welcoming coffee

10:00-10:15

Opening Speech

- Philippe Bourmaud, Director of the French Institute of Anatolian studies

10:15-10:30

Introduction – “Toward a sociology of quantification of and in Turkey”

- Necati Mert Gümüş (Aix-Marseille University - Mesopolhis)
- Théo Malçok (EHESS, CETOBaC)

10:30 -12:00

First Session – Working with quantities: fields of application and socio-political uses of statistics in contemporary Turkey

- Aykız Doğan (Panthéon Sorbonne University, IRD): “For a historical sociology of quantification expertise and activities in Turkey”
- Başak Taraktaş (Boğaziçi University): “Exploring the rise of electoral alliances in Turkey”
- Discussant: Ali Çarkoğlu (Koç University)

12:00-13:30

Lunch break

13:30-15:00

Second session – Migration as a source of statistical controversies

- Solène Poyraz (EHESS, IFEA): “Counting Syrians in Turkey: the social value of numbers”
- Elif Aktaş (Strasbourg University, LinCS): “Challenges in quantifying high-skilled migration from Turkey”
- Discussant: Morgane Labbé (EHESS, CRH)

15:00-16:00

Round table on Migration

- Deniz Sert (Özyeğin University) representing GAR (Göç Araştırmalar Derneği - Association of Migration Research)

16:00-16:15

Coffee break

16:15-18:00

Third session – The public policies of numbers in Türkiye

- David Billeau (Science Po, IFEA): “Counting the mines, cleaning each mine. A local issue directed by an international obligation”
- Necati Mert Gümüş (Aix-Marseille University, Mesopolhis): “Quantification and public participation in local politics of Turkey”
- Youenn Gourain (Gustave Eiffel University, LATTS): “What is being stabilized by the numbers? Political-technical negotiations around the risk of building collapse in Turkey”
- Discussant: Brian Silverstein (Arizona University, Center for Turkish Studies)

20:00

Dinner with the participants

# ARGUING WITH NUMBERS

DAY 2

Friday, 29th September 2023

Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes, Istanbul

9:30-10:00

Welcoming coffee

10:00-11:30

**Fourth session: Old and new controversies over the translation of religiosity into figures in Turkey**

- Ali Çarkoğlu (Koç University): “Challenges in the measurement of religiosity on the basis of Turkish experience”
- Théo Malçok (EHESS, CETOBaC): “‘Be counted, numbers matter!’ From statistical blindness to recognition – when does counting atheists count in Turkey?”
- Discussant: Fuat Dündar (TOBB University of Economics and Technology)

11:30-12:30

**Round table: Governing with Numbers**

- Cavit Can Pektezel representing Istanbul Planning Agency – Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

12:30-14:00

Lunch break

14:00-15:30

**Fifth session: Polls and electoral strategies in Turkish politics**

- Halil Yiğit (Paris 8 University, IFG): “The making of public opinion in competitive authoritarian regimes : election polling and political power relations in contemporary Turkey”
- Elise Massicard (Science Po, CETOBaC): “The production of electoral results in Turkey. Actors, struggles, controversies”
- Discussant: Claire Visier (Rennes-1 University, Arènes)

15:30-15:45

Coffee break

15:45-17.15

**Round Table: Counting to Protest**

- Fidan Ataselim (Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu)
- Juliette Font (French observatory on sexist and sexual violence in higher education)

17:15-17:30

**Concluding remarks & publication strategies**

- Necati Mert Gümüş (Aix-Marseille University - Mesopolhis)
- Théo Malçok (EHESS, CETOBaC)

