

---

# Leyla ile Mecnun: Absurd Comedy or a Cult TV Series of Youth Culture in Turkey?

Demet Lüküslü\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Yeditepe University – Faculty of Arts and Sciences Sociology Department 26 Agustos Yerlesimi  
Kayisdagi Atasehir, Turquie

## Résumé

### Biography

DEMET L'UK'USL'U is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Yeditepe University, Istanbul. She completed her PhD in Sociology at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. A revised edition of her PhD dissertation was published in Turkish by İletişim Yayinlari in 2009 (2nd edition: 2013; 3rd edition: 2014): *T'urkiye'de Gençlik Miti. 1980 Sonrasi T'urkiye Gençliği* (The Myth of Youth in Turkey: The post-1980 youth in Turkey). She is also the co-editor of the book *Gençlik Halleri: 2000'li Yillar T'urkiyesi'nde Genç Olmak* (States of Youth: To be Young in Turkey in the year 2000) published in 2013.

---

### Abstract

This paper analyzes the television series, *Leyla ile Mecnun (LEM)*, which became one of the "cult" series of the youth culture in Turkey and aims to demonstrate the links between the series and that culture. The study of the television series *LEM* helps to reconcile the two axes of the conference ("the production of series subject to numerous constraints" and "the 'imaginary' inspired by Turkish series, representations, symbols and taboos"). First of all, the series is a good example for a discussion of the production of series under numerous constraints. Since *LEM* was produced for the public channel, TRT1, the producers of the series had to face the censorship of the channel. Not only was the series produced under the constraint of censorship but also once the TRT officials announced, right after the Gezi Park events, that they wanted to end the contract, it was also impossible for the series to find another channel even though it had become one of the cult series of the urban middle class youth in Turkey. Not only are the difficulties and the constraints of the series interesting but so are the "tactics" used by the series to overcome these difficulties and constraints. In this manner, this paper argues that there is also a link between the "tactics" used by the producers of the TV-series and the characteristics of youth. It is argued that they both use "necessary conformism (L'uk'usl'u, 2009; L'uk'usl'u, 2013)". Instead of entering into direct confrontation with these constraints, the producers chose to transcend them with creativity instead of resisting openly against them. Concerning the censorship of words or images related to alcohol or cigarettes, for example, they chose to name them differently. In other words, they created a new jargon, the jargon of the series to overcome the rules of the public channel. In fact, it is this jargon as well as the characters of the series that became very popular with the youth. Even though, the series never got high ratings (since the older

---

\*Intervenant

generations seemed to have difficulty understanding this "absurd" comedy), it became a cult series of the young generation, a series that is not really a phenomenon of "classic TV" but of the "internet" since young people watched it online most of the time and commented on it using internet (twitter, facebook, online dictionaries, etc). It is this popularity which turned the series into an important image of Gezi Park in late May and June 2013 as well as its rejection by the public channel.