Dilek Üstünalan

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PhD in Sociology, based in İstanbul, Türkiye

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Sensory Ethnography, Qualitative and Arts-Based Methodologies

Migration, Forced Displacement and Belonging

Space, Place and Homemaking

Gender and Intersectionality

Embodied Research, Dance and Somatic Practices

EDUCATION

2018-2025	**PhD in Sociology, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University**
Dissertation:	Homemaking Experiences and Sensory Interactions of Syrian Middle-Class Women in İstanbul
Supervisors:	Prof. Evrim Hikmet Öğüt and Prof. Begüm Özden Fırat
	This thesis explores the homemaking experiences of middle-class Syrian refugee women with high cultural capital in Istanbul through a multi-scalar and sensory ethnographic approach. Home is not considered a fixed and idealized physical space, but a relational process shaped by bodily, emotional, and social interactions. The study adopts a methodological framework focusing on embodied, sensory, and emotional experiences, incorporating sensory ethnography, sensory walks and in-depth interviews in an interactive manner. The research reveals that homemaking process is not limited to housing but extends to semi-public and public spaces such as community centers, neighborhoods, and city centers.
09/2024-02/2025	Erasmus PhD Exchange at University of Macedonia, Department of Balkan, Slavic & Oriental Studies Supervisor at the host institution: Assist. Prof. Dr. Eleni Sideri
09/2023-03/2024	Visiting PhD student at University of Trento, Department of Sociology Supervisor at the host institution: Prof. Paolo Boccagni
09/2009-12/2012	**MA Political Science and International Relations**, Yıldız Technical University
Dissertation:	"Debates About Democracy during 2000's in Turkey"
Supervisor:	Prof. Haldun Gülalp
2016-2017	**Pedagogical Formation in Philosophy**, İstanbul University
2013-2017	**BA Sociology**, İstanbul University (open education)
2004-2009	**B.Sc. Computer Engineering**, İstanbul Technical University

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Academic Employment

2/2026 – current	**Postdoctoral Research Fellow in MENBELONG ERC Project** **Özyeğin University** Exploring how single migrant men create strategies for belonging outside formal structures. https://menbelong.net/
11 – 12/2024	Researcher in BICC research project "Return and Belonging after Conflict-induced Displacement (RE-MIG)" Field research supervisor: Clara Schmitz-Pranghe Identification of interview partners and conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews on the topic of return and reintegration with migrants from former Yugoslavia in İstanbul.

Other Roles at Research Centers and Projects

2010-2014	Research Assistant in the Project "Political Party Organizations and Youth Branches in Turkey" - supported by TÜBİTAK. Project supervisor: Prof. Fulya Atacan Literature review, project writing, data collection (conducting interviews and non-participant observation at political party events/ meetings), research team meetings for the evaluation of the research process and comparison of data collected from different fields.
2010-2011	Assistant at Center for Global Studies (CGS) at Yıldız Technical University Organising interdisciplinary seminars and conferences in the field of social sciences. Director: Prof. Haldun Gülalp
2009 – 2010	Website design and development of the Women's Studies Application and Research Center at MSGSU

Publications

Üstünalan, D. (2026). Tutkuyla çalışmak, güvencesizlikle yaşamak: Türkiye'de çağdaş dansçı olmak. In Y. Öztürk (Ed.), *Kültür-sanat alanından güvencesizlik deneyimleri*. Ayrıntı Yayınları.

Üstünalan, D. (2026). Sınır Çizme Pratiği Olarak Ev: Ev Kavramını Göçle İlişkili Düşünmek. Cogito (Evde Olmak), (120). Yapı Kredi Yayınları.

Schmitz-Pranghe, C., Üstünalan, D. and Ujkanović, A. (2026). Notions of Return and Belonging in the Sandžak: Why Belonging Matters for Reintegration and Societal Participation. Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC). https://www.bicc.de/Cosmos/Peacebits

Öztürk, Y., Üstünalan, D. and Metin, B. (2020) Pandemi Sürecinde Kadınların Ev İçindeki Deneyimleri ve Evde Kalmanın Duyguları. Feminist Tahayyül, 1(2): 185-225. http://www.feministtahayyul.com/?page_id=1289

Grants and Awards

09/2023-02/2024	TÜBİTAK 2214-A International Research Fellowship Programme for PhD Students Funded research stay at the University of Trento, Italy

04/2022-06/2025 Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit (BAP) Project Support Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, PhD Thesis Project Support

Seminars and Presentations at Conferences

09/10/2026 "Temporalities of migration and Layered belonging: Governing Syrian Afghan men in Türkiye", DeZIM Conference 2026, 7-9 October 2026, Bielefeld.

10/07/2025 "Sensory and Temporal Dimensions of Homemaking Among Syrian Female Refugees in Istanbul", 5th ISA Forum of Sociology, 6-11 July 2025, Rabat.

21/02/2025 "Sensory Interactions and Homemaking Processes of Middle-class Syrian Women in Istanbul", 6th International PhD Seminar, University of Macedonia, Department of Balkan, Slavic & Oriental Studies, 21-22 February 2025, Thessaloniki and online.

25/12/ 2024 "Workshop: Sensory Ethnography" (*Duyusal Etnografi Atölyesi*) MSGSÜ Sosyoloji Konferansı 2024, 5-7 December 2024, İstanbul

11/12/2024 Seminar: "Sensory Ethnography and Sensory Walking Method", University of Macedonia, Department of Balkan, Slavic & Oriental Studies, Thessaloniki

29/02/2024 "Sensory Interactions and Homemaking Processes of Female Syrian Refugees in Istanbul", University of Trento, Doctoral School of Social Sciences, Trento

15/06/2019 "Social Determinants to Sense of Home in the Context of International Migration: Experiencing the Sense of Home through Relational Movement Practices", Migration and Music/Dance Research Workshop, İstanbul

14/02/2018 "Potential Psychological and Social Effects of Contact Improvisation", Add-Ist International Art and Design Dialogue Symposium, İstanbul Aydın University

02/11/2017 "New Openings in Dance Field and Contact Improvisation", İstanbul Aydın University Art and Culture Management Departmental Seminar Series

09/04/2013 "Neoliberalism, Rhetoric of Terror and Question of Democracy in Turkey" Center for Global Studies (CGS) at Yıldız Technical University, İstanbul

NON-ACADEMIC PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

NGO Leadership & Project Coordination

1/2026 – 5/2026 Instructor of Creative Dance Workshops for girls at BoMoVu

11/2019 – 08/2023 **Project coordinator, workshop facilitator and board member at BoMoVu Association** (Network of Sport and Body Movement for Vulnerable Groups), İstanbul

Coordinated four major social inclusion and bodily rights projects:

- Girls' Building Their Future with Sports (2022-2023)
- Active Schools (2020-2022)
- Collaborative Digital Body Percussion Performance (2020)
- Your Movement is Free (2019-2020)

Non-Academic Publications

2020 Guide to Sports for Social Change (Sosyal Değişim için Spor: Beden Hareketi Programı Geliştirme Rehberi – in Turkish): editor and co-writer of the sections "Physical, emotional and cultural safety" and "Activity samples".

2020 Active Schools - Teachers' Guide (Aktif Okul Öğretmen Kılavuzu – in Turkish): co-writer of the distant activities

2018 Contact Improvisation and Sense of Home (web article)

Thematic Workshop Facilitation

- **Migration, Psychosocial Support & Community Integration:**

  Self-Care, Critical Pedagogy and Game Design Workshop for Psychosocial Support Workers of Support to Life Association (June 2022, İzmir)

  Movement improvisation and contact improvisation classes for refugee women and children at Ad.dar Community Center (2017-2018, 2021-2022, İstanbul) and Yuva Association (October 2017, Hatay).

  "Move and play" workshops for refugee children for refugee children, Migrant Solidarity Association (January 2020, İstanbul)

  "Safe and playful contact with children" workshop at Tarlabaşı Toplum Merkezi (November 2019) and within the Symposium "Children's right to participate: Where are we?" in Bilgi University, İstanbul (November 2019)

- **Post-Disaster Response & Volunteer Training:**

  Workshops for volunteer sports/ arts/ games facilitators in the earthquake region (March-April 2023)

  Movement and games based workshops with children in Hatay - volunteer work as part of the psycho-social support program of EDD (March-April 2023)

  "Support the field" workshops for the coordinators and volunteers of Hatay Deprem Dayanışması and Maya Derneği in collaboration with Anadolu Kültür (May 2023, Hatay)

  "Presentation of Best Practices in Vulnerable Areas" workshops at Cultural Training Program for Post Disaster Recovery organised by Spaces of Culture (May – June 2023; İzmir, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep)

- **Children's Rights, Active Schools & Teacher Training:**

  Capacity building workshops for Nesin Vakfı staff and volunteers (2021-2022).

  Active Schools project teacher training workshops across 6 provinces (2021-2022).

  "Improvisation Games" teacher workshops with ÖRAV (2019, 2021, 2022) and Öğretmen Ağı (2021).

  "Open Space" children-led workshops facilitator, Istanbul Bilgi University Child Studies Unit (2019).

Somatic Practice & Dance Education

2017 – current	Contact Improvisation Dance Teacher: Workshops in İstanbul, İzmir, Eskişehir, Ankara, Fethiye, Innsbruck, Trento, Thessaloniki
2018 – 2025	Fall in CI – International Contact Improvisation Gathering in Türkiye Organising team member

2022 – 2023	Impulstanz Symposium for Dance and Other Contemporary Practices: LACE #1 - Organising team member
2016 – 2022	IDOCDE (International Documentation of Dance Education) Symposiums within ImPulsTanz Vienna International Dance Festival Organising team member from 2019 to 2022 (Volunteer in years 2016, 2017 and 2018)

Seminars and Presentations at Conferences

19/10/2021	Webinar: “Creating Physically, Emotionally and Culturally Safe and Inclusive Spaces”
19/06/2021	“Peace and Sports”, Rotary Peace Fellows Alumni Association’s Global Peace Conference
08/12/2020	MeloBe - Collaborative Digital Body Percussion Performance: Workshop Facilitation in Imece.Lab 2020 Event (German-Turkish Youth Work)
07/12/2019	Inspire4All: Integration through Sport and Inclusion for Refugees in Europe Conference participation
01/07/2017	Seminar: "Sanatçı Beden ve Yaşayan Beden" (Body of the artist and the living body), BoMoVu, İstanbul

Technical and Administrative Professional Experience

01/2016 – 11/2019	**Computer Engineer**, Boğaziçi University Technical Support in Computer Engineering Department: Website administration, maintenance and development Tracking and evaluating udergraduate internships Presentation activities
08/2014 – 12/2015	**Computer Engineer**, Kartal Koşuyolu Hospital Management of IT Department
08/2011 – 08/2014	**Student Affairs Officer**, Boğaziçi University Financial Aid Office

SKILLS

Languages	**Turkish** (native), **English** (C1), **Spanish** (B2)
Digital Skills	Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint), Website design and management (Drupal, Wordpress), Video conferencing and cloud systems, Online survey makers, Project management softwares