

HAUNTING PASTS, BROKEN FUTURES : YOUTH SUBJECTIVITIES UNDER  
THE CONDITIONS OF VIOLENCE AND PRECARITY

by

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CONDITIONS OF VIOLENCE AND PRECARITY

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## ABSTRACT

### HAUNTING PASTS, BROKEN FUTURES : YOUTH SUBJECTIVITIES UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF VIOLENCE AND PRECARITY

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Keywords : Alevism, Collective Memory, Youth, Okmeydanı, Precarity,  
Revolutionary Groups, Space, Subjectivity, Violence

This thesis investigates the formation of youth subjectivities in the upper part of Okmeydanı district, populated by Alevi-Kurdish families, and in which many revolutionary groups are active. I focused upon the narratives and self-representations of Alevi-Kurdish youth to examine their understandings of political violence, discriminations, and precarious conditions based on both local issues and common economic and social problems in the neoliberal era. In the history of Okmeydanı, violence and political struggle has constituted an affective framework for youth subjectivities, and the image of political/‘rebellious’ youth has been associated with the space of Okmeydanı. Yet, I discussed in this thesis how urban youth in Okmeydanı also develops different subjectivities beyond and within political realms to make sense of their social worlds; and their subjectivities reframes and requestion collective memory, political struggle and local codes and identities in the light of new possibilities, rather than direct appropriation of past and local structures into their lives. In this sense, I argue that Okmeydanlı youth experience oscillations between affective discourse of the space shaped by violence, resistance and ‘heroic’ actions in the political realm, and different temporal adjustments in their lives to reconcile the emotional belonging to the space with the need and desire for new opportunities.

## ÖZET

### DADANAN GEÇMİŞLER, PARÇALANMIŞ GELECEKLER: ŞİDDET VE GÜVENCESİZLİK KOŞULLARINDA GENÇLİK ÖZNELİKLERİ

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Anahtar Kelimeler : Alevilik, Devrimci Gruplar, Gençlik, Güvencesizlik,  
Kolektif Bellek, Mekân, Okmeydanı, Öznellik, Şiddet

Bu tez, Alevi-Kürt ailelerinin yaşadığı ve birçok devrimci grubun aktif olduğu, Okmeydanı bölgesinin üst kısmında yaşayan gençlerin öznelliklerinin şekillenmesini incelemektedir. Politik şiddetin, ayrımcılıkların, ve hem yerel konulara hem de neoliberal dönemdeki genel ekonomik ve sosyal problemlere dayalı güvenciz koşulları anlamlandırmalarını incelemek için, Alevi-Kürt gençlerin anlatılarının ve öznel temsillerinin üzerinde durdum. Okmeydanı'nın tarihçesinde, şiddet ve politik mücadele gençlik öznellikleri için duygusal ve etkileyici bir çerçeve oluşturdu, ve politik/'isyankar' gençlik imajı Okmeydanı'nın mekanları ile ilişkilendirildi. Ancak, bu tezde Okmeydanı'ndaki kentsel gençliğin politik alanların içinde ve ötesinde farklı öznellikler de geliştirdiğini; ve, geçmişi ve yerel yapıları kendi hayatlarına doğrudan almak yerine, gençlerin öznelliklerinin kolektif belleği, politik mücadeleyi, yerel kod ve kimlikleri, yeni olasılıklar ışığında, yeniden anlamlandırdığını ve sorguladığını tartıştım. Bu bağlamda, mekâna duygusal bağlılığı, yeni fırsatlara olan ihtiyaç ve istek ile uzlaştırmak için, Okmeydanlı gençliğin, mekânın, politik alandaki şiddet, direniş ve 'cesur' eylemler ile şekillenmiş, etkileyici çevresi ile hayatlarındaki geçici düzenlemeler arasında bocalamalar yaşadığını savunuyorum.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION .....	1
Methodology .....	8
CHAPTER 2 : THE SPATIAL AND POLITICAL FORMATION OF OKMEYDANI .....	18
Historical Background .....	18
Transformations in the Social and Spatial Landscape of Okmeydanı after the 1980s : From Gecekondu to Varoş Neighbourhood .....	22
The Political Structure in Okmeydanı .....	27
CHAPTER 3 : ANXIOUS GENERATION : EXPLORATIONS ON VULNERABILITIES OF URBAN YOUTH .....	30
The Construction of Youth .....	30
Urban Youth in Okmeydanı .....	35
Self-Representations of Growing Up in Okmeydanı .....	37
Family, Migration, Poverty : Inherited Failures .....	45
Experiences of Being an Alevi While Growing Up .....	54
Violence in Everyday Life .....	62
Conclusion .....	71
CHAPTER 3 : "SACRIFICE IS JUSTICE" : ON POLITICAL SUBJECTIVITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF POWER, VIOLENCE AND RESISTANCE .....	72
Revolutionaries, Heroes, Martyrs: Collective Memory, Testimony and <i>Bedel</i> .	76
Encounters with the State : The Police .....	100
Arrestments and F-Type Prisons: Spaces of the State .....	105
The State Violence and Violence of Youth .....	113
From the Peaceful Image of Hacı Bektaş Veli's Lion and Antelope to the Sword of Hz. Ali, <i>Zulfiqar</i> .....	113
The Paradox of Violence and Resistance .....	121
Conclusion .....	129
CHAPTER 4 : EVERDAY FORMS OF RESISTANCE BEYOND VIOLENCE ....	131
The Dilemma of Belonging .....	146
Conclusion .....	152
CHAPTER 5 : CONCLUSION .....	155
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	160



## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about emerging youth subjectivities in Okmeydanı, a place located in the margins of Istanbul. Throughout the thesis, I will investigate different, contradictory, and in some cases, unexpected subjectivities which urban youth develops under the shadow of collective violence. Spaces of Okmeydanı and *Okmeydanlı*<sup>1</sup> people has witnessed increasing state violence and emergency procedures under the police surveillance in recent years. Moreover, Okmeydanı has become the important place in which many revolutionary legal and illegal groups have been actively engaged in political actions. Okmeydanı region has been assumed in the category unreachable and “dangerous” neighbourhoods in Istanbul by state policies (Yonucu, 2014), and has experienced exclusionary discourses by media under the label of *Varoş* since the middle of the 1990s. (Aksoy, 2001; Bozkulak, 2005, Gönen and Yonucu, 2011). It is the one of most prominent neighbourhood that includes mainly Alevi population, and also Kurdish people who migrated from different regions in recent years. Moreover, the neighbourhood has become identified as leftist and/or revolutionary space in Istanbul with some other districts<sup>2</sup>. In this landscape, urban youth in Okmeydanı has become increasingly politicized and the main actors in violent clashes between police and revolutionary groups. These clashes ended up with many injuries, deaths and the imprisonment of urban youth for political reasons. Violence and uncertainties violence

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the thesis, I use *Okmeydanlı* term to define people living in Okmeydanı who feels an attachment to this particular space. This term is derived from my interviews with local people who define themselves as *Okmeydanlı*. See also (Kurt, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Gazi, Küçük Armutlu, Nurtepe, Sarıgazi and Gülsuyu neighbourhoods can be shown as examples of those districts.

brings along have become the part of everyday life of urban youth to question and reconstruct future possibilities in their lives.

In this sense, I will examine how *Okmeydanlı* urban youth narrates themselves to make sense of growing up and living in this environment framed by repressive policies by the state. This research revolves around youth's accounts and understandings of the community and the self, and in line with these accounts, how they frame and produces their individualities to respond the ambivalent questions which both political and structural violence bring forward. Within the context of the ruptures of violence, poverty and exclusion from the society, the thesis will investigate how and in which ways the subjectivities of urban youth take different forms to deal with contradictory and extensive possibilities. While collective violence and "the violence of everyday life" (Scheper-Hughes, 1993; Bourdieu, 2000) in youth experiences have direct and compelling impacts on their lives as a result of disintegration of referential codes. It is also very important to scrutinize how, in their narratives, urban youth frames violence, narrates their life trajectories and self-presents their poverty and the exclusion from the institutions of everyday life derived from racial, economic and ethnic problems.

In Okmeydanı, everyday life of urban youth is embedded with the potential danger of vulnerability. This vulnerability prevents a stable condition through which urban youth could predict future possibilities in their lives, and it makes them recast the formation of their individualities. The landscapes of Okmeydanı frequently explodes which Veena Das calls as "the grammar of everyday life" (2006). *Okmeydanlı* youth constitutes the most troubled part of people living in Okmeydanı which lacks stable conditions in the obscurity of future possibilities. Yet, in the absence of stable meanings, my thesis will try to understand the search of urban youth to make new meanings and deal with the possibilities the landscape of Okmeydanı offers. Thus, the questions of how urban youth composes a new repertoire of meanings and to what extent this repertoire oscillates between the community and the self take an important place in my thesis. Through youth's life-story narratives, my thesis will examine articulations of political subjectivities and individualities and interactions and exchanges between the political and the life. Political struggle of urban youth is not segregated from everyday life in search of giving meanings to their lives and stories. In this sense, narratives of urban youth give important clues to understand experiences of young

people and their attempts in the midst of the political struggle. These issues will be my main arguments throughout the thesis.

In order to organize my thesis, in the first chapter, I will give the brief history of Okmeydanı and the spatial and social transformation of landscapes of Okmeydanı to utilize the historical specificity of Okmeydanı in Istanbul in later chapters. Historically, Okmeydanı was archery area and archery lodge<sup>3</sup> used by military practices in the era of the Ottoman Empire. The most land titles of this place are owned by Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation, and thus this has made the legal situations of the buildings inhabited by urban poor a problem for years. For *Okmeydanlı* people, the story of Okmeydanı started in the end of the 1960s as a *gecekondu*<sup>4</sup> neighbourhood. After the 1950s, Istanbul has witnessed the huge population inflow from different regions of Turkey due to the economic and social policies of Turkey in this era (Keyder, 1999), and Okmeydanı became one of the first *gecekondu* settlement to accommodate new migrants who were searching for an economic stability in the era of national developmentalism in Turkey (Keyder, 1987), due the fact that the district located near the main work areas in Istanbul (Kıray, 1998). Migrants who mainly came from Sivas, Tokat, Erzincan, Ordu, Giresun and other rural areas from Turkey composed the main dwellers of Okmeydanı. Given the absence of the tidy urban policies to organize the settlements of migrants, Okmeydanı district has shared same problems of many *gecekondu* districts. Without basic infrastructures, title deeds of houses built by settlers themselves and economic integration, the district was considered as “under-developed”, and non-urbanized side of the city. On the other hand, until the beginning of the 1980s, those characteristic problems of Okmeydanı like many other *gecekondu* districts was expected to be solved through the ultimate integration into urban economy, leading to “modernization” of those districts (Erman, 2010; Kıray, 1998).

Yet, after the 1980s, the expected integration of those neighbourhoods failed. Along with new economic policies implemented after the 1980 coup d'etat, problems of settlers in Okmeydanı and urban poverty have become chronic features for urban poor (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2001). After this period, Okmeydanı also underwent spatial changes due to amnesty laws, which, was to bring unauthorized buildings into legal

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<sup>3</sup> That is also the root of the name of okmeydanı. Literally, okmeydanı is derived from the combination of two words: “ok” and “meydanı” which means in english, “archery” and “area”.

<sup>4</sup> In Turkey case, *gecekondu* neighbourhoods are shantytowns areas located in the periphery of the large cities, such as Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir. Literally *gecekondu* means “settled or built overnight”. The history of the development of gecekondu districts in Turkey, see (Erman, 2010).

scope, (Demirtaş, 2009) in line with the social and economic policies of the ruling Motherland Party (ANAP). After the amnesty laws, the landscape of Okmeydanı changed dramatically with the destruction of one-story shanty houses and, in the place of them, the construction of multi-storey apartment blocks (Tekeli, 2008). However, the laws did not give a permanent confidence to *Okmeydanlı* people because temporal documents for legal condition of buildings distributed by the government has not stood for legal title deeds, which is also now an important problem for local people in Okmeydanı.

For my arguments, the historical specificity of Okmeydanı is based on the fact the district has become the main area of revolutionary groups since the 1970s. In the political atmosphere of the 1970s, Okmeydanı like many other *gecekondu* districts became the main place where radical socialist political groups organized their political movements. Moreover, within the context of exclusion of urban poor from state institutions, those political groups emerged as the “protectors” of *gecekondu* districts through providing basic needs of local people and keeping local order. The districts also witnessed armed skirmishes between revolutionary groups and the police and, sometimes the army. In this era, Okmeydanı was considered by local people as one of “liberated zones” (*Kurtarılmış bölgeler*) (Aslan, 2004). This has also shaped main narratives and self-presentations of being an *Okmeydanlı* around the argument of dissident and revolutionary community.

After the 1980 coup d'etat, along with the repressive policies of the military government, many members of revolutionary groups were imprisoned, tortured and killed in custodies and death penalties. Throughout the 1980s, those districts were silence in terms of political organizations. On the other hand, after the 1990s, and especially the 1995s, Okmeydanı has become one of the prominent place in which many diverse revolutionary groups flourished. Since then, violent struggles between police and political groups, and political engagement of urban youth have been spatialized in Okmeydanı. This new raise of political mobilization of urban youth in Okmeydanı differs from the previous era because urban youth has faced more compelling problems in their political and personal lives, and political groups became more radicalized and experienced the brutality of state violence in Okmeydanı relentlessly. In this sense, in the first chapter, I want to examine this spatial, economic and political transformation of Okmeydanı to give an background information on which my interviewees base their

stories. It is also important to investigate the discursive transformation of Okmeydanı and their impacts on lives of urban youth. Moreover, this background information gives important tools to analyse economic and social roots of problems youth faces and the spatialization of both violence and resistance in Okmeydanı.

Accordingly, in the second chapter, I want to focus upon experiences of *Okmeydanlı* urban youth and their narratives of those experiences. I will try to include their accounts of problems, memories and understandings they face while growing up in Okmeydanı. Since urban youth in Okmeydanı experiences economical and educational problems, generational conflicts, and racial and ethnic discriminations in their lives due to both new neo-liberal economic policies and discriminating state policies, they feel insecure and vulnerable to structural problems and poverty. Thus the chapter will analyse their self-representations of this vulnerability. This discussion provides key understandings of formations of subjectivities of youth. Moreover, I will argue the embodiment of violence in their lives. I will investigate the question of how violence and political groups are formed in their everyday lives. To what extent does this existence of violence and resistance affect the formation of their individualities and perceptions of living in Okmeydanı? What do they remember about witnessing to this violent environment? I also focus upon the question of how and in what conditions collective memories of violence, space and resistance are remembered, and narratives of both the history of Okmeydanı and collective violence are reappropriated again in their lives. Thus this chapter will account for experiences of youth through time, space and memory and their attempts to extract meanings from those experiences. The chapter is an ethnographic account of troubles and crises they experience. It will be a self-representation of their life stories in which they live in the specific time and context (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2005). I argue that it will be helpful to understand the formations of political subjectivities and individuality in later chapters.

In the third chapter, I will investigate political subjectivities of youth that emerge as a prominent imaginery in their lives. After the 1995s, Okmeydanı has seen a plethora of political groups, ranging from radical socialist groups to legal institutions. I want to understand premises of those groups which offer to urban youth. The chapter will account for their stories and motivations to participate in revolutionary groups and their “thresholds” to engage in political activism and violent struggles. I will try to understand what meanings in their lives *Okmeydanlı* youth search for in their political

activism and to what extent the landscape of Okmeydanı affect this formation. In Okmeydanı, the political life oscillates between the self and the community, and each time it gains new meanings and values. Thus, to understand their political activism is very based on their personal failures, hopes and future imaginations in their lives. I want to focus upon what violence and political groups offer to them and how they form their political subjectivities in terms of the complicated relationship between violence, freedom and justice. In this sense, I will examine their understandings of sacrifice, deaths and martyrdom within the context of power and sovereign relations. The chapter argues how their performativities shaped around political subjectivities provides them with new possibilities and failures. Urban youth in Okmeydanı, who experiences the unpredictability of state violence, manages to craft political agency to challenge discourses and practices imposed by the state with their own subjectivities. In related to the first chapter, I want to attempt to respond the question of what arguments they develop to deal with the problems and experiences which occurred in their lives and what meanings they assume in their political activism. This chapter mainly revolves around which narratives give validity and intelligibility to their stories of “becoming a revolutionary”. In this sense, the third chapter is about what kind of symbolic codes politicized spaces of Okmeydanı and promises of political groups offer to urban youth to respond uncertainties in their lives.

In the fourth chapter, the thesis will examine emerging different and “unexpected” subjectivities of youth to resist violence and counter-violence. Why I use the terms “unexpected” is because Okmeydanı provides youth with popular representations of resistance around violence. This creates a perception of a homogenous structure of social and individual actions. Yet, in the chapter, I want to show heterogeneous structures and different forms that subjectivities take. Although young people suffer from social problems and experience memories of collective violence in their lives, the chapter will investigate youth resisting not only to vulnerabilities but also to dominant structures and identities of the community. They try to create a different stance toward violence and inhabit social world in different manners. Thus, I will focus upon how young people lives and imagines their subjectivities that resist ‘expected’ ways and the subjection to the language of violence and resistance. How do they experience memories of collective violence both experienced by themselves and inherited from previous generations? To what extent are the memories important in the

process of rethinking their pasts in and for present? What kind of representations do they develop in their narratives? How do they actualize and materialize the self in different manners through performing interactions, representations and practices in their everyday lives? I will aim to investigate variety of ways through which they incorporate their experiences into future possibilities while they become estranged from both familial and local visions.

While Okmeydanı is a segregated space in Istanbul in terms of discursive and political practices and under constant police surveillance, the district is not in the middle of nowhere where only war conditions prevails in the conventional sense of the word. It is located in the middle of Istanbul which is the biggest city in Turkey. Thus, in this chapter, I also investigate possible ways of transgressing the boundaries of Okmeydanı by urban youth. I will focus upon youth's perceptions of encounters and interactions with other parts of Istanbul and how this encountering offers, or fails to offer, new possibilities to *Okmeydanlı* youth. Further, these contradictions and (non-)articulations between Istanbul and Okmeydanı could pave the way for new identities of urban youth to give new meanings to their individualities and socialities and to develop realignments with ruptures that violence and social suffering produce. In short, the fourth chapter will deal with alternative ways of formation of subjectivities of urban youth to remake and make sense of their world for themselves.

In the last conclusion chapter, taking arguments of all chapters into the consideration, I will propose discussion about violence and subjectivity relation. The chapter will scrutinize complicated relations and different ways between formation of subjectivity and structural and political violence. As Biehl et al. put it, referring to Das (1997), "subjectivity is always a contested field" (Biehl, Good and Kleinman, 2007). It is a field in which many different possibilities of individual and collective experiences could produce new self-knowledges and self-formations against expected social actions. In this sense, in the last chapter, I will discuss ambivalent relationship between agency, community and memory and how subjectivity rearranges those relations again and again.

## Methodology

*“By focusing closely on particular individuals and their changing relationships, one would necessarily subvert the most problematic connotations of culture: homogeneity, coherence and timelessness.”*

*Lila Abu-Lughod (1991: 154)*

My ethnographic study took place in the upper part of Okmeydanı in which mainly Alevi population live and most of skirmishes between police and political groups occur. Okmeydanı is not a legal name of a neighbourhood but the name of the district which includes three neighbourhoods. Okmeydanı is at the intersection of Kağıthane, Şişli and Beyoğlu boroughs of Istanbul which are mainly business and entertainment zones. Yet, my field of study comprises one neighbourhood consisting of Alevi population which are called “upper neighbourhood” by local people, whose official name is Mahmut Şevket Paşa neighbourhood<sup>5</sup>. This region has been the main place of different political groups in which violence is the part of everyday life of people. My interviewees live in this part of Okmeydanı and constitutes the most troubled segment in Okmeydanı which experiences collective violence and social and economic problems on daily basis.

I conducted nineteen in-depth interviews<sup>6</sup> with young people who live in this region, including eleven male and eight female. The age of my interviewees is between the ages of fourteen to twenty seven. These interviews are based on their narratives of life-stories. I also conducted four additional interview with some individual from older generations to have knowledge about the history and transformation of Okmeydanı from the perspectives of local people. This also constitutes the oral history part in my research of historical and social transformation of Okmeydanı. It gives important clues to understand changing perceptions of the landscape of Okmeydanı.

While Okmeydanı is generally mapped out as an Alevi neighbourhood in homogenous categories, neighborhood residents have different backrough informations. This is also the condition for life stories of my interviewees. My interviewees now live in Okmeydanı. Yet some of them were not born in Okmeydanı and migrated to Okmeydanı from different regions in different ages. There are also many differences in places from where their families came. Those places are Sivas, Tokat, Erzincan,

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<sup>5</sup> From now on, I mean the upper part of Okmeydanı when I use the word Okmeydanı.

<sup>6</sup> I have used pseudonyms to protect the privacy and security of my interviewees.



Erzurum, Tunceli, Muş, Batman and Diyarbakır etc.. Some of them have never seen the cities in which their fathers or mothers were born, and some of them did. Among my interviewees, there are second and third generation residents in Okmeydanı and, on the other hand, some of them migrated to Okmeydanı because of political and/or economic reasons in their childhood. Thus their belonging to Okmeydanı and their memories of experience in Okmeydanı differentiate in line with their backgrounds. They also differ from each other in terms of religious and ethnic origin. Among them are Turkish-Alevi, Kurdish-Alevi, Zaza-Alevi and Kurdish-Sunni origins. The “Kurdishness” is also different among young people in Okmeydanı. Some of them came from Tunceli, Erzincan and Elazığ region and some came from Diyarbakır, Muş and Batman where the civil war between the army and PKK was at its climax in the 1990s. Therefore, this makes life-stories different, and changes what seems to them important to tell in their life stories. So my research also wants to investigate this heterogeneity of biographies.

On the other hand, it is very difficult to make clear distinctions between my interviews. It has become common in my interviews that they share many similar experiences, future and political problems. After coming to Okmeydanı, they face similar economical and educational problems. They build their narratives on the articulation of past and present stories and those narratives are not isolated from what they have experienced in Okmeydanı in present. Their individualities are formed in different manners, depending on familial issues, gender relations, political and future imaginations. They share a heterogenous identity of *Okmeydanlı*, but this identity is negotiated in line with new possibilities. In this sense, while sharing many similar experiences in the present in Okmeydanı, the process of formation of individuality and identity is changeable, contradictory and unexpected.

For my thesis, the ethnographic research draws upon from self-expressions and self knowledge of their experiences. When I started to conduct my interviews, I realized that those interviews were their narratives and representations of what they experienced in their life stories. Those narratives do not necessarily ensure the factuality of informations and it is not the issue for my research. Rather than emphasising historical causalities (Kurt, 2010) of past and present, I focus upon youth’s self-presentations and self-knowledge about large-scale events, and social and political discourses. They are their oral-life stories in the formation of their subject and identity (Neyzi, 1999; Portelli, 1997). Their self-expressions of what happened and happens to them are narratives that

offer grounds for formation of the self . Hence, as Portelli points out (1998: 68), “there are no ‘false’ oral sources [...]” and “ ‘wrong’ statements are still psychologically ‘true’ and this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts”. In one sense, these conversations are their performances and their choices of what they want to tell, and consider significant to tell and not to tell.

The transformation of experiences into narratives gives important clues to understand their construction of language. So their language and performance are not about “reality” of events, but their communication with her and his “I” to listener (Darıcı, 2009). Moreover, their construction of language in their stories is neither only recall of stories nor isolated from present social conditions. This construction is negotiable and contested field through which subjects construct their self and their understandings of social conditions. As Das and Kleinman writes (2001: 21-22, cited in Biehl et al. 2007), the language to narrate their experiences “does not function here purely as a medium of communication but is also to be viewed as experience which allows not only a message but also the subject to be projected outwards”. Narratives are, therefore, stitching of inner and outer representations fashioned by subjects to deal with existing discourses. Thus these narratives also open up a space for my interviewees to question and remake meanings of lived experiences.

In this sense, my interviews with urban youth as the subjects exposed to violence analyses subjective experiences in a “contested field” of the self belonging both to inner understandings and, at the same time, to large scale events. I will avoid to understand formations of subjectivities as independent from social contexts, but rather think through those subjective formations within destructive challenges and productive possibilities of the general context. Biehl et al. argues “to speak of the subjective is always to speak of the intersubjective; and to theorize the intersubjective is to decisively reject the notions of a universal human essence [...]” (2007: 29). In this sense, the question of how different subjectivities are formed is related to a broader social context and yet, how they contradict and differ themselves from generalities violence produce. So, I refuse the dichotomy between subjective and collective or to pit one against the other, but rather I try to understand subjective formation as an individual space of overlapping subjective and collective experiences. I will contemplate how this overlapping and memory of experiences are folded onto ongoing relationships.

## **Field Study and Being an “Outsider” in the Field**

I started to conduct my fieldwork in July, 2014. This study continued until April, 2015. When I started to conduct in July 2014, I do not mean I started to conduct my interviews in that time. This was a very long process. I started conducting my livestory interviews in January, 2015, it took four-month period to finish my interviews. Until that time, I had to spend many times in Okmeydanı. It is because I was not familiar with the landscape of Okmeydanı and what I mainly knew about Okmeydanı was based on news and preliminary investigations. I needed to engage in routine activities and everyday life in Okmeydanı. I have never been in the inner spaces of Okmeydanı in my lifetime until Berkin Elvan’s funeral who is a young child hit on the head by a tear-gas canister fired by a police officer during anti-governmental Gezi protests in the summer of 2013, died in 2014, following a 269-day coma<sup>7</sup>. The funeral attracted the public attention in Turkey and was followed by widespread demonstration in Istanbul and other cities in Turkey. While Okmeydanı has witnessed armed skirmishes between the police and political groups for many years and these ended up many injuries and the imprisonment of political youth, the public awareness of events in Okmeydanı has come to the agenda after the funeral. In the funeral, Okmeydanı has witnessed the huge flows from other districts in Istanbul as never before. For many of the people attending the funeral, this was the first time they came to Okmeydanı as a result of long-term discursive segregation and stigmatization of Okmeydanı as a “dangerous” neighbourhood. Moreover, before and after the event, five people were killed by police violence after the summer of 2013 and until the summer of 2014 I started my fieldwork. In this year, Okmeydanı was re-labeled as “disordered” and unreachable by the Turkish media. This is the brief atmosphere under which I started my fieldwork.

Besides, I had no friends in Okmeydanı and no affiliations with any group or institution. I was grown up in Ordu until the entrance to the university, which was a “quiet” city in the Black Sea region of Turkey where there has never occurred an armed skirmish between political and/or ethnic groups and the army or police since the 1990s as far as I remember. Thus, I have never lived in politicized and/or Alevi populated neighbourhoods like Okmeydanı in Turkey. I came from Turkish-Sunni family which occupies a safety and “privileged” position in the case of Turkey, and I have never experienced racial, ethnic or religious discrimination and political violence. I

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<sup>7</sup> <http://t24.com.tr/haber/berkin-bugun-ugurlaniyor-kalabalik-okmeydaninda-toplanmaya-basladi,253202>

have no personal memory about collective violence, expect images of violence in the brutal environment of the 1990s. Moreover, in my family, there are not any individuals who has experienced political violence. Thus, in short, I was an “outsider” and foreign ethnographer attempting to understand everyday lives of *Okmeydanlı* imbued with political and structural violence. Yet, what does being an “outsider” in the field mean? In other words, with the reference to Kirin Narayan’s famous questions (1993), “how ‘native’ is a native anthropologist?” and “how ‘foreign’ is an antropologist from abroad?”

Rather than focusing on dichotomies between insider-outsider, native-foreign or observed/observer, Narayan argues that these dichotomies fail to understand the position of ethnographer in the field, and she proposes “we might profitably view each anthropologist in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations. The loci along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple in flux”(Narayan, 1993: 671). The self/other relationship is an negotiable space and changes in time and space. The “self” of ethnographer is also open to new flows from field study. There are of course many imbalances from power relations and structure inequalities in my field work due to an ethnographer and reasons I mentioned above. Yet, asymmetries in the field happen always. To deal with inequalities, I attempted to minimize them in a self-reflexive manner in the sense that my position in our conversations affects what my interviewees tell to me and their approach in our dialogues is a compelling issue in power relations. However, this relationship between the self and the other is not strict and stable, but unpredictable, interactive and in flux. Thus, I attempted to activate this relationship on interactive and changeable basis to open up new possibilities of dialogues and encounters as far as possible. This, of course, does not mean that I did not pretend to have similar feelings and affections in *Okmeydanı* after entering the field and having the whole knowledge about everyday life in *Okmeydanı*. Nor was I under the illusion that I have engaged with a part of life in *Okmeydanı* immediately in the same manner. To be sure, my “self” has undergone important changes in my fieldwork, but it did not necessarily happen in just the same way as *Okmeydanlı* youth experience. Interestingly, this self-reflexivity of my position and knowing of my subjectivity in our encounterings paved the way for more interactive, comfortable and exchangeable atmosphere in our conversations. Self- reflexively engaged ethnography in my fieldwork

brought out interpretive and dialogical processes and an “aura of opening up”(Marcus, 2007: 1128) in my interviews. This kind of approach is based on the replacement of “objectivity” in the field with interactions of ethnographer and interviewees. This interaction is between my subjectivite position and my informants’ subjectivities. That is, the production of knowledge in the ethnographic field is not derived from “presenting” the others unilaterally, but changing connections and exchanges between the “I” of the researcher and the “I” of the subject. In those exchanges, representations, self-expressions, and knowledge gains new meanings and value in each time. In this manner, I argue in my fieldwork that it is important to consider the inadequacy of an artificial “objective” stance towards the field, and to offer more engaged and reflexive research on the basis of self-consciousness of subjectivity of ethnographer. Again I have to say that this subjectivity is not single and strict one, but it is the one which Rosaldo (1989) has termed a “multiplex subjectivity” that antropologist exhibits “with many croscutting identifications” (Narayan, 1993: 676). Within this context, Narayan states that “to acknowledge such shifts in relationships rather than present them as purely distant or purely close is to enrich the textures of our texts so they more closely approximate the complexities of lived interactions” (ibid. 680). Thus I argue that this kind of interactions provide ground of understandings of lived experiencess and frankness of dialogues. On this very ground, writing of ethnography could get rid of the limits of distanced and preoccupied knowledge, and production of knowledge, as Narayan puts it, “in this scheme, is not transcendental, but situated, negotiated and part of an ongoing process. This process spans personal, professional, and cultural domains” (ibid. 682). In this framework, I attempted to conduct a fieldwork in a more dialogic mode of ethnography to break active-passive relation between an ethnographer and informant because, as Clifford points out, this kind of analysis “rejects any sharp separation of an interpreting self from a textualized other” (Clifford, 1988:134).  
Combination of meanings

Fortunately, I had a chance to meet some local people living and working in Okmeydanı. I got in touch with those people through relationships in other neighbourhoods and institutions<sup>8</sup>. One of them is a 32 years-old woman who has been working and living in Okmeydanı for fifteen years. She would become one of my close friends in Okmeydanı in my field work. This friendship helped me in creating an

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<sup>8</sup> I would like to thank to Deniz Yonucu for her immense supports to enter the field and intiate my first contacts in Okmeydanı.

environment of confidence to meet and contact with young people. Since she is one of the members of a voluntary organization, *Anadolu'da Yaşam kooperatifi*, carrying on voluntary projects in Okmeydanı to provide local people with cheap consumer goods, and, she is an acknowledged person in Okmeydanı, the connection with this organization and their sincere support to organize my interviews provide convenience to me in my later contacts with political groups and young individuals.

In this sense, I was very lucky from the beginning of entering the field because the security is one of the biggest problem. Due to their political activities, many local and, especially young people, abstain themselves from contacting with a person who wants to research on *Okmeydanlı* youth. Even though some of them are not engaged in any political groups or activity, the constant danger of police arrestments, without any clear charges, makes many people hesitate to enter a conversation about routine activities in Okmeydanı, let alone in-depth interviews about their life stories. Many people in Okmeydanı, especially politicized young people, suspects a “foreign” person to be a police spy to keep the record of political activities and blacklist them for eventual charges and custodies. Taking many random custodies in Okmeydanı into consideration, it is a very fair prejudice against my activities with a recorder. For instance, although I assured one of my interviewees of the privacy of the record and I spent four months to only meet with my informants in Okmeydanı, he, who was released from the prison one year ago, suspected whether I was a police spy after our interview, which I thought that occurred in a sincere and confident environment, and in which he told his life story to me frankly. After finishing the interview, he contacted with our common friend and asked him that “I told everything about my life to him, are you sure that he is not a police spy?” This can be considered as an exceptional case, but it also made me think about the importance of security and confidence to conduct sufficient interviews. That is one of the reason why I spent ten months to enter the field and finish my interviews.

Yet, this is only one dimension of the long process of my fieldwork. As I said before, I met with my initial contacts without difficulty. After contacting with some institutions and young people in Okmeydanı with the help of local people, my possible interviewees started to become visible in my mind and, at that time, my planned schedule for the interviews indicated that I could have possibly finished my interviews and field work at the beginning of January 2015. Yet another problem emerged in my

field work. At first, it did not seem to me as a problem. In my first conversations with urban youth, I was heavily informed of their political activities and attitudes. Some of the knowledge are of course very important to understand the political formation of urban youth in Okmeydanı, but many of them seemed to me very repetitive in line with discourses of political groups. At first glance, I was happy that I could found many young people telling their thoughts about their political attitudes. Yet, those initial conversations made me think that my field work was considered as a kind of journalistic activity, even though I clearly stated every time that I was coming from Sabanci University and studying on everyday experiences of *Okmeydanlı* urban youth in the settings of political violence. Since, after the Gezi park protests, Okmeydanı has attracted public agenda and media about police violence and political groups, the very important issue in Okmeydanı is political violence and politicized youth. Thus my first conversations revolved around political attitudes unavoidably, and many of them did not initially relate their conversations with their life stories and their perceptions/imaginings in their lives upon which my thesis has focused. This problem, of course, could be solved by engaging in many activities in Okmeydanı and creating new friendships with my possible interviews. In this sense, I came to realize that my fieldwork should have not only provided me with answers, but also, and more importantly, questions to be asked and be thought. Thus the fieldwork would be a up and down process. Interview questions could only be achieved by more engagement with the life in Okmeydanı. I think that this postponement in my fieldwork gave important tools and notes to me to contemplate on my thesis questions.

In this process, I started to work as a voluntary English teacher in the organization, *Anadolu'da Yaşam Kooperatifi*. It was a very good chance in that I became engaged with routine activities in Okmeydanı, and Okmeydanı became a part of my routine life. This regular relation helped me to take important notes and make observations in Okmeydanı besides interviews. Moreover, it developed the arrangement of my questions for my interviews, and engendered new friendships with youth, leading to starting our conversations on a more confident basis. My voluntary activity lasted for 4 months, and it helped me to create new networks.

In this framework, I conducted nineteen life story interviews within a four-month period. All interviews were conducted in Okmeydanı. The place of interviews are diverse, including local cafe houses, local institutions, and public parks. Few of

them also occurred in their homes. I did not have a specific request for the location of interviews, but rather I asked them for personal choices about the location. The interviews were conducted in different places where they feel free and secure to tell. Interestingly, this choice for the location gives important clues about their relationships between street and home. During our interviews, some of my informants said that they feel free to tell their stories “here (parks, cafes etc. ) rather than at home”. It made me think about relationships between families and youth in Okmeydanı. Besides the interviews, it also developed new arguments in my research about youth’s perception of public-privacy relationship and their belonging to the landscape of Okmeydanı.

My interviewees also varies in terms of their political histories and familial background. I interviewed with young people who has a political attitude, but has never experienced any custody and police arrests, and has imprisoned for different years for political reasons in F-type prisons, the place which takes an important place in political imagery of *Okmeydanlı* youth. I also conducted interviews with young individuals who are not engaged in any political group or activity despite the fact many of them experienced collective violence. In my research, it has created a comparative perspective in terms of their understandings and imaginations. In spite of many differences, all of them did not hesitate to tell story without turning off the recorder. Although some of them had a political history and are under lawsuit process, they told their life stories to me openheartedly. They also narrated sensitive and dangerous issues in their familial and political lives.

Those interviews are the first time to tell their stories to the recorder. They have never experienced this kind of interviewing process in terms of academic and/or journalistic concerns. This process was also very different and new for them and those interviews are also their self-expressions and narratives to me and themselves about concerns, problems, hopes and memories. In this sense, the act of telling stories was also their performances about their lives and identities. Through these performances, they construct the self and the framework of what and how they want to tell. The interviews thereby gain its depth and become a layered surface which seems to mediate between words and things. To focus on interviews in narrative analysis, therefore, requires to be considered in both the context in which interviews were conducted and the interpretative level of textual forms. Throughout my analysis, it is the way through



which I position my research to reach an effective understanding of narratives of my interviewees.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE SPATIAL AND POLITICAL FORMATION OF OKMEYDANI

#### Historical Background

The history of the formation of Okmeydanı is parallel to the general context of urbanization in metropolitan centers in Turkey after the post-war decades. Starting with the mid-1940s and, especially from the beginning of the 1950s, Turkey experienced a rapid and unplanned urbanization because of the fact that massive migratory flows to a few major metropolitan centers occurred in that period. The impetus for migration to metropolitan centers was accelerated by mechanization of agriculture in that period and the industrial growth in major urban areas (Öncü, 1988).

This rapid urbanization in Turkey, however, was incommensurate with the economic development. Nor did the process combine with sufficient urban policies serving needs of new migrants. New ways of the formation of urban landscapes in the periphery of metropolitan centers began to emerge in urban land. Public areas became the main places urban poor constructed single-floor houses without any constructing licence and legal status. Given the absence of urban infrastructure and goods such as, roads, transportation, electricity, water etc., those squatter settlements were self-sufficient places in response to local demands and needs. The inadequacy of economic conditions to compensate migratory flows resulted in the increase of informal and “marginal” economic sector among urban poor (Kıray, 1998). New mechanisms implemented by urban poor to survive both economic and social conditions shaped the main framework of landscapes of *gecekondu* neighbourhoods and lives of local people

Settlements were assessed under the categories of “unauthorized”, “unregulated” and “unplanned” (Erman, 2010). Legal authorities did not constitute a strict regulation of *gecekondu* settlements because *gecekondu* areas provided an important labor force

for industrializing urban areas, and they occupied an important place for Turkey's electoral politics between the 1950s and the 1980s. Not corresponding to tumultuous expansion of problems derived from migrations, the urban policies in turn failed to implement new regulations, and were shaped around clientelistic nature (Öncü, 1988; Tekeli, 2008). As Öncü puts it, in this framework, "the most expedient form of dispensing patronage was that of non-exercise of legal controls and their selective relaxation" (1998: 45). In this sense, *gecekondu* neighbourhoods has up and down relations with legal authorities and political parties. The clientelist nature of urban policies were embedded in future imaginations of local people about the legal condition of their houses.

In this period, new migratory flows to urban centers continued unabated and resulted in massive expansion of squatter settlements in big cities. Yet, after the 1970s, *gecekondu* districts moved beyond the category of places serving to the housing needs of migrants. The districts became the main target of urban land rent as new channels of capital accumulation and attracted new interesting groups, such as contractors, landowners and first generation migrants, who obtained legal status of their lands and houses thanks to laws implemented in different years for the relaxation of building codes and regulations. New migrants after the 1970s, therefore, experienced more compelling problems. Those migrants were blocked from access to urban land to construct their houses as did previous migrants. They became tenants of previously constructed squatter houses and were excluded from urban land economy (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2001). Migrants in turn constitutes the most excluded and marginal segment of urban space. Along with the rise of economic crisis in the mid-1970s, the marginal economic sector were mainly based on non-unionized, low-wage, informal jobs. In this sense, Istanbul became emblematic of the bifurcation between modern, developed parts of the city and "under-developed" and "non-modernized" parts, symbolically and spatially associated with *gecekondu* neighbourhoods. So-called modern parts of the city became the main standard through those "backward" regions were "judged" (Mc Micheal, 1996, Yonucu, 2005).

Within this framework, Okmeydanı began to emerge in the urban landscape of Istanbul. Migration to Okmeydanı dates back to the 1960s and escalated after the beginning of the 1970s. Many migrants came from the Black Sea region such as Ordu, Giresun etc., and the inner parts of Anatolia, such as Erzurum, Erzincan, Sivas, Tokat

etc. (Kurt, 2010). The specificity of the location is based on the fact that it is situated in the middle region of Istanbul and function as a strategic “bridge” between business-commercial and industrial zones. It offered different alternatives for local people to work in factories and small workshops located around Haliç region, and in formal and informal sectors in business areas, such as Şişli and Beyoğlu. Given the absence of transportation systems supplied by legal authorities, the central location of Okmeydanı helped local people in commuting from homes to work zones with, also unauthorized, shared or collective taxi or minibus (*Dolmuş*). After the construction of the Bosphorus Bridge over the Bosphorus strait in 1973, which connects the two sides of Istanbul, namely Asia and Europe, one of the main linking roads to the bridge was located at so near Okmeydanı that the road divided Okmeydanı region into two parts. For the rest of the city, Okmeydanı was also known as the place including the one of the biggest hospital in Istanbul, namely Okmeydanı Training and Research Hospital which started to facilitate in 1971. Now and then, these have marked Okmeydanı as an important crossroad in the changing urban space. In terms of distance to business and commercial zones, unlike some *gecekondu* neighbourhoods. This feature of Okmeydanı, in turn, attracted new migrants flows increasingly, leading to the expansion of population.

Migration has affected the formation of Okmeydanı. Since, historically, Okmeydanı was an unbuilt area in which there were only the archery area and archery lodge and “targeting stones to define the distances of the arrows”<sup>9</sup>, the history of Okmeydanı starts with that of migrations. Such that, it can be traced local imprints of migration in memory of the space. Even the appellation of some important centers by local people in Okmeydanı, which are also now used, carries the traces of migration. One of them, *Şark Kahvesi*, (which literally means “East or Oriental coffeehouse”) has become a very important center area in Okmeydanı. Şevket, 62 years old, who came to Okmeydanı in 1974, recalls the history of this place:

Şark Kahvesi eskiden beri merkezdir. Anadolu’dan gelenlerin uğrak yeridir. Orada inerler, sonra dağılırlar İstanbul’a. Otobüs fimaları anadolu’dan gelir burada bırakır genelde insanları, ondan sonra otogara topkapı’ya geçerdi. Onun için türkiye çapında bilinen bir yer. Şark kahvesi diye geçer. Merkez Şark Kahvesi’nin olduğu yerdir. Daha sonra apartman oldu. Şu an bildiğimiz anlamda Şark Kahvesi

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<sup>9</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/okmeydan%C4%B1>

yok. O anlamda anadolu'dan göç edenlerin ilk uğrak yerleri ve yerleştikleri en yoğun bölge olma özelliğini taşıyor.<sup>10</sup>

There was indeed a *Şark* (East) coffehouse in the first years of Okmeydanı. That was the place where many migrants came from the “East” and took a rest, and then started a new life around Okmeydanı. Thus migration is very prominent theme in the memories of local people about the past of Okmeydanı and the spatial formation. In the first years of migration, the process of construction of dwelling had started with, first, finding an unbuilt land, and then, constructed their houses with the aid of personal connections. First dwellings were mainly single-floor, cottage-like houses and built only with the purpose of housing needs. This was the very familiar story many *gecekondu* districts experienced.

As mentioned above, the period after the 1970s witnessed the revaluation of *gecekondu* districts with the expansion of population in Istanbul and the involvement of different interest groups. *Gecekondu* districts became the target of capital accumulation through urban land rent. The condition would sooner or later threaten the status of unauthorized buildings. Within the context of ambiguous conditions of squatter settlements, radical revolutionary groups became engage with the organizations in Okmeydanı and other *gecekondu* settlements. The places were the center where many radical illegal groups mobilized local people for their rights and districts. Given the absence of the integration into urban space, in Okmeydanı, urban youth was mobilized by revolutionary political groups, and Okmeydanı became the place of dissident (or, revolutionary) public. The support for revolutionary groups in Okmeydanı came from local people, including also many Alevi young people, and this political involvement would affect the political atmosphere of today's Alevi neighbourhoods, of which Okmeydanı is still the most prominent district.

Political groups functioned as the protector of local people against land mafia and state interventions to displace local people. Public councils (*halk komiteleri*) and neighbourhood associations (*mahalle dernekleri*) (Aslan, 2004) were shaped around political organizations, engaging with problems of the districts. The presence of

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<sup>10</sup> Şark Kahvesi has become the center for years. It is the central place for those coming from the Anaotlia. They were getting off busses and dispersing to different areas of Istanbul. Intercity buses from the Anatolia used to drop off passengers and then, drive to Topkapı bus terminal. For this reason, it is known throughout Turkey. It is named as Şark Kahvesi. The center has been the place of Şark Kahvesi. It was later transformed into a apartmen block. Now, there is not a Şark Kahvesi in the literal sense of the word. In this sense, it has had the characteristic of the first and the densest place where they came to and settled in.

revolutionary groups was prominent in administrative issues of Okmeydanı. They also became important figures to solve infrastructural and security problems. In the period, Okmeydanı and other *gecekondu* district, in which revolutionary groups were dominant, were perceived as “liberated zones” by the public and themselves (ibid.). The organization of revolutionary groups also affected local codes around which *Okmeydanlı* people construct their identities. In the absence of efficient urban development policies, revolutionary groups have become both administrative and political figures that have affected the theme of growing up and living in Okmeydanı until today. Thus it should be considered that the history of spatial formation of Okmeydanı has been coincided with everyday presence of revolutionary groups in the lives of *Okmeydanlı* people.

### **Transformations in the Social and Spatial Landscape of Okmeydanı after the 1980s : From *Gecekondu* to *Varoş* Neighbourhood**

Okmeydanı in the 1980s underwent both spatial and social changes. The 1980 coup d'etat and new neo-liberal economic policies implemented by both the military government and subsequent ones had multi-dimensional effects in Okmeydanı. After amnesty laws for regulation of *gecekondu* buildings, many single-floor houses were transformed into apartment blocks, changing the entire landscape of Okmeydanı. While temporal documents (*tapu tahsis belgesi*) for this transformation in lineu with title deeds were given to local people, it did not solve the legal status of buildings forever<sup>11</sup>. Transformation from temporal documents into permanent title deeds was postponed by subsequent governments. Now, it is a very compelling issue for *Okmeydanlı* people in the sense that the lack of title deeds became an important justification for urban renewal projects started by the AKP government. The legal status of temporal documents ended by 2015 and local people have been encountering obstacles to obtain title deeds for years. Given the condition that Okmeydanı became the most attractive place, due to its specific location, for entrepreneurial groups and contractors in the context of the construction boom in Istanbul, *Okmeydanlı* people, as householders or tenants, has facing the threat of demolition of the buildings.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/28370010.asp>

In this period, *gecekondu* districts in the specific context of Turkey, has been redefined and “remarginalized” under the framework of neoliberal discourses and new policies (Balibar, 2004; Calderia, 2000; Gönen and Yonucu, 2011; Wacquant, 2002). While *Gecekondu* neighbourhoods have been always considered marginal sides and the “other” of modern urban spaces, those places were expected to be integrated into the “modern” city as a result of expected economic developments in the era of developmentalism. The process would be completed by the integration of migrants into urban life through becoming the part of a stable working class (Kıray, 1998). Yet the project failed, and *gecekondu* neighbourhoods were excluded from neoliberal economic policies, constituting a new chronic urban poverty which have no oppurtinites to create a regular economic condition (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2001). In this economic environment, Istanbul has become the main place of neoliberal urban projects, and many industrial factories were moved from the city. Starting with the 1990s, Istanbul has witnessed the idea of global city, and state and urban authorities attempted to attract finance and service sectors in the contest for becoming a global city (Öncü and Keyder, 1994). As many global cities experienced in the era (Sassen, 1991), employment opportunities for working class in Istanbul has decreased dramatically (Keyder, 1995). Many working people in *gecekondu* districts had to work in irregular, casual and non-unionized jobs, rather than regular ones. Most of Istanbul’s working population were employed in the flexible and precarious jobs offered by mainly new developing service sectors. The worsening economic conditions, along with the abondenment of social state policies which have never been impelemented effectively in Turkey, changed life conditions of urban poor and exacerbated vulnerability to changing economic and social conditions.

Moreover, in this period, *gecekondu* neighbourhoods were excluded from social and cultural life of the city and stigmatized as a dangerous place and a threat to urbanized life-styles (Bozkulak, 2005; Etöz, 2000). Urban poor has been redefined in the neoliberal discourse of urban fear (Low, 2001). In Istanbul, new urban elites who became the main beneficiaries of liberal economic policies, have withdrawn into gated communities (Candan and Kolluoğlu, 2008; Öncü, 1997). The polarization between urban rich and poor reached an unprecedented scale in terms of both spatial and discursive segregation. More importantly, the failure of integration into urban became the failure of stigmatized urban poor itself, rather than structural problems and

economic changes. The failure was considered as an endemic and unsolvable issue in the “other” part of the city. The justification of exclusion and segregation gave moral and cultural meanings to the “otherness” from which urban fear of *gecekondu* people was developed. In this context, new identities emerged, or were constructed, from new lifestyles and polarizations. As Ayşe Öncü states that, Istanbulite identity is based on a “myth” that occupies an “exclusive” which that utilizes new privileges, and is associated with urbanite lifestyles through new consumption practices and identities (Öncü, 1999). *Gecekondu* neighbourhoods, therefore, was shaped around the mythical construction of the “Other” against the “real” Istanbulites. This otherness was imbued with the complex articulation of cultural, ethical, racial and religious identities, rather than only class-based identities. The responsibility of this failure has been conferred to urban poor. The whole problems *gecekondu* neighbourhoods experienced were perceived to be derived from becoming the ‘outsiders’ of the city. Gaining pejorative and exclusionary meanings, the term *gecekondu* was transformed into *Varoş*<sup>12</sup> with discriminatory practices in both state policies and the media. As a result, in the discursive construction of the other in *gecekondu/varoş* neighbourhoods, it resulted in the alienation of middle and upper classes from those “no-go” areas, and blocked the channels of encounters with local people in *varoş* districts and negotiations with the problems of urban poor. In short, the transformation was completed in the sense that, as Deniz Yonucu describes clearly, “by the 1990s the *gecekondu* people had become the ‘Other’ of the ‘city’ who not only strongly rejects getting urbanized, but also poses a serious threat against the well-being of the city” (Yonucu, 2013: 223, original emphasis).

*Varoş* neighbourhoods were mainly associated with disorder, violence and insecurity. They have become the exact opposite of globalized and secured Istanbul. After the 1990s, the media approached those districts in exclusionary and pejorative manners in their headlines to warn urban people about the danger of *Varoş* neighbourhoods. According to the media, nobody knows how and when danger comes from those areas. To be sure, the media spurred the tension between ‘dangerous places’ and the rest of the city with their news (Gönen and Yonucu, 2011). Among the headlines, there were some prominent ones: “Ümraniye exploded”, “Varoş said I will explode”, “Varoş invaded the city” (Aksoy, 2001; Yonucu, 2013). The connotations of

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<sup>12</sup> *Varoş* derives from *város* word in Hungarian language. It literally means urban fringe.



*varoş* with explosion and invasion create the perception of unpredictability of dangers, that come from *varoş* ready to explode for whatever the reason is, and underscore the need to push *varoş* districts to the edge of the city, or enclose them into their districts, not to ‘invade’, like ‘savages’, the city center. Images and words of ‘invasion’ and ‘explosion’ cause the articulation of violence and disorder with the *varoş* in the semiotic mapping of urban space. While some newspapers and columnists approached the issue more carefully, ‘problems’ were assessed under alleged cultural identities which have failed to respond necessities of the big city (Bozkulak, 2005). Moreover, the issue has been mainly considered as security problems by legal authorities. This ‘security problem’ was combined with the state discourses that emphasise that those areas are the hotbeds of religious or leftist radical political groups which are assumed an important threat against modern Turkey. As Etöz (2000, cited in Yonucu, 2013: 224) states that, “in the construction of the *varoş* ... where poverty rules, illegal activities dominate and crime and violence grow *varoş* emerges as *contra* the city”. Thus the engagement with those neighbourhoods has become the issue of ‘securing’ dangerous areas. As the result, exclusionary practices have coincided with constant police surveillance and militarist techniques to secure areas not in every *varoş* neighbourhoods, but in, especially politicized ones.

Within this context, Okmeydanı has become one of the prominent politicized district. After the 1980 coup d'etat, many members of radical political groups were imprisoned, and so Okmeydanı witnessed the disappearance of political activism like the whole country. Yet, after the 1985s, in the context of the amnesty for political criminals, Okmeydanı became one of the places in which weak political organizations emerged. In this era, new migrants also came to Okmeydanı, and especially, after the 1990s, Kurdish people from the south-eastern part of Turkey migrated to Okmeydanı, along with different parts of metropolitan centers, due to the civil war and forced displacements.

Although there have been always Alevi and Sunni families since the beginning, Okmeydanı began to be mapped out as an Alevi neighbourhood, especially in this period, albeit its heterogeneity. It coincided with new discriminatory policies and discourses against Alevi identity and massacres occurred in the period. Though the exclusion of Alevi people has historical roots, since the 1978s, many Alevi people in rural areas of Turkey experienced the bloody massacres, one of which is Maraş

massacre in which over one hundred people were killed by neo-fascist groups. Following the massacre, Alevi families had experienced other brutal attacks, and also, ‘apathy’ and dereliction of state authorities. It was the climax that in 1993, after attending Friday prayer, a mob of fundamentalists set fire to the hotel in Sivas many Alevi people and intellectuals stayed. Those intellectuals and Alevi people came to the city to celebrate 16th century Alevi poet Pir Sultan Abdal. The massacre was televised for seven hours without the intervention of any legal authorities. The incident caused public outrage and fear among Alevi communities in different cities of Turkey. The tension has been transferred to metropolitan centers, like Istanbul. In 1995, there occurred a clash between the police and the demonstrators in Gazi neighbourhood, which is also identified as Alevi and leftist district in Istanbul, following the killing of an Alevi *dede* (an important spiritual guide in Alevism) and subsequent neglect of both the police and state authorities. The clashes ended up with the killing of 23 people living in the district. This general framework, therefore, directly affected the formation of Alevi neighbourhoods, like Okmeydanı, both spatially and politically. It also intensified the tension between Alevi communities and the state in Turkey.

In the context of policies against Alevi communities, the mapping out of Alevi-identified neighbourhoods is also related with the general tendency that, in the “cultural domains exemplified by the rise of identity politics” (Neyzi, 1999: 2) after the post-1980 period, many working class neighbourhoods defined themselves in line with cultural, ethnic and religious identities, rather than only class-based identities. With the rise of Kurdish movement after 1984, identity politics became important political arguments in Alevi-leftist identified districts as well. Thus *Okmeydanlı* Alevi people have also experienced both their collective and individual experiences in the axis of their identities. Political organizations and arguments developed in Okmeydanı have also interacted with emerging cultural domains drawing from narratives, history and memories.

These identities also became relevant in the internal formation of Okmeydanı. Although the district has consisted of Alevi-Sunni families coming from different cities, after the 1990s, Alevi people were intensified in the upper part of the district. The lower parts of Okmeydanı located near the districts of Kulaksız and Kasımpaşa are populated by mainly Sunni families who migrated from the Black Sea region. The upper part populated by Alevi and Kurdish families has witnessed state violence and armed

skirmishes between revolutionary groups and the police, unlike the lower parts of Okmeydanı. Thus, the intensification of spatial and symbolic segregation between both communities in the same district reached to such a degree that material spaces represent the polarization from graffitis to everyday actions of *Okmeydanlı* people. In such a congested space, the segregation also documents the dominant representations of identities in the construction of the ‘other’ in marginalized communities (Green, 1999). While both Alevi-Kurdish and Sunni communities in Okmeydanı occupies the same economic position, this segregation and the politicization of the upper part of the district give insight into the different forms of social suffering and structural violence, not only based on economic conditions, but also identities. The Alevi-Kurdish part of Okmeydanı I focused on, therefore, also describes that processes of structural violence, based on ethnic and racial discriminations, have rendered individuals more vulnerable to social suffering. This makes more compelling for urban youth to endure problems of everyday experiences. Choices, failures and hopes become more contradictory and unpredictable in everyday life. In this sense, varied forms of structural violence should be explored to give answers as to why some young people become highly politicized, and some not.

### **The Political Structure in Okmeydanı**

There is a variety of legal and illegal political groups and institutions in Okmeydanı. Although DHKP-C is the most prominent political group among local people, I do not analyse a specific political group, but rather political mobilization of youth around the axis of violence and resistance. These groups are the important part of the everyday life. Urban youth particularly are offered new collectivities by them. Political groups are important figures in the future imagination of youth. Engaged or not engaged with any of them, they emerged in routine conversations of *Okmeydanlı* people. Most of them are located in my field area, the upper part of Okmeydanı, which includes a small area. The area is also the place where clashes between police and political groups occur.

Being an always dissident or revolutionary neighbourhood, Okmeydanı has witnessed the major rise of political activities since the 1995s with the rise of the leftist movement in Alevi neighbourhoods in metropolitan centers of Turkey. In this period,

the one of the biggest illegal Marxist-Leninist movement, DHKP-C <sup>13</sup>, whose history dates back to the 1970s, became dominant political group in Okmeydanı. In the 1990s, the movement carried out salient political actions in the big cities of Turkey. It has been organized around the policy of urban guerrilla warfare to subvert the constitutional order of Turkish Republic and, in place of it, establish a socialist state. Okmeydanı has become the main field of political activities of the movement. One of the reason of the predominance of the movement is that important political figures and acknowledged local people were gathered around DHKP-C to engage with political activism. Another reason is that, after the 1980 coup d'etat, many leftist institutions did not become active effectively, and withdrew from gecekondu neighbourhoods into the city centre. As a result, urban youth were mobilized by radical and/or armed revolutionary groups, such as DHKP-C.

Yet, DHKP-C is not the single political movement in Okmeydanı. There are many of them which correspond different segments of local people. Since the 2000s, the district has hosted political legal and illegal groups which are based on different politics and practices of socialism. Moreover, with new Kurdish migrants in Okmeydanı, it also started to host both illegal groups and legal political party of Kurdish movement. In the violence-intensified area of Okmeydanı, the heterogeneity and plethora of political groups blocked to both draw homogenous conclusions in terms of political struggle, and claim an overarching purpose and identity around which urban youth forms their subjectivities. With the plentitude of radical leftist movements, it is not a coincidence that there occurred many bloody clashes and violent activities both the police and the political groups. Regardless of this or that group, urban youth in Okmeydanı constituted the most radicalized and engaged part of this political atmosphere. In the process, many of them were arrested, tortured and imprisoned for years, making their vulnerable lives more precarious. Violence and resistance became main themes of life stories of young individuals. In this framework, violence has shaped the landscape of Okmeydanı both spatially and discursively.

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<sup>13</sup> DHKP-C is the abbreviation of “*Devrimci Halkın Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi*” which literally means the revolutionary people's liberation party–front.



## **CHAPTER 2**

## **ANXIOUS GENERATION : EXPLORATIONS ON VULNERABILITIES OF URBAN YOUTH**

### **The Construction of Youth**

Youth has experienced troubled contradictions of neoliberal capitalism. In the historical context of modernism, youth occupied a liminal and transitory space from childhood to adulthood (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2005; Neyzi, 2001). In modernist construction, youth was approached as “a source of trouble or in trouble” (Roche and Tucker, 1997: 1), and yet the ‘problem’ of youth was expected to be solved or absorbed into the process of modernism. Predicaments of childhood and youth was to be corrected and the category of childhood to be updated to the category of adults by means of correct articulation within modernist progress. Youth and childhood became an undeveloped space invested by capitalist relations to organize proper adults for the society. Youth became no longer embedded in only kinship relations, but related with new meanings attributed by capitalist ideals and institutions. The place of young people was shaped around both troubled segment of society, and yet future hopes of modernity. It signified many connotations in normative categories of capitalism, but it was not framed as subjective place in which their representations of themselves could have been considered. The articulation of youth with the society was assumed not to occur in their youthness, but in their articulation with structural relation in the reproduction of social construction of adulthood through long-term education. The issue of childhood and youth was thus that of training of not-yet citizens of society. To abandon compelling and deviant attitudes of youthness was the prerequisite of becoming an adult in capitalist societies. The ultimate integration of youth into the worlds of adult became related with, and were required by, the social reproduction of conditions of bourgeois life through families and educational institutions.

In this sense, youth and childhood were not an autonomous space with their identities, but was a contradictory category considered as both a must-be-abandoned span a pedagogical area for re-production of norms of society. The body of youth is, thus, inscribed by the ideological formation of capitalism (Althusser, 1994). In this

frame, this age span should be temporary and educated by institutions. The category of youth is a contradictory space in the sense that it occupies both a troubled place to be solved and an invested place for future functioning of capitalist societies. The ‘wrondoings’ and deviant behaviours of youth could be tolerated only under the category of childhood and youth and should not be transferred into next age spans of life.

The development of youth was located at an universal and chronological category. Youthness and childhood were assessed as “a transcultural and transhistorical category” (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2005: 19) which develops in the same way and whose problems are solved by the same proper approaches. Ideological aspects of the formation of category of youth were then normalized and surpassed under pedagogical abstractions and hegemonic discourses of science. As categorizing the ‘normal’ and the ‘deviant’ (Foucault, 1984), modern societies draw the limits of becoming adult and youth as proper and deviant, normalizing the historical constructions of categories as natural and/or biological conditions. What was at stake is not the understandings of new approaches to social life by youth, but the ultimate integration into economies of capitalist society through normative developments. Foucault is right, then, to argue the role of category of childhood through “codifying” relations between adults and children (Foucault, 1984). He writes that:

The problem of "children" (that is, of their number at birth and the relation of births to mortalities) is now joined by the problem of "childhood" (that is, of survival to adulthood, the physical and economic conditions for this survival, the necessary and sufficient amount of investment for the period of child development to become useful, in brief the organization of this "phase" perceived as being both specific and finalized) . It is no longer just a matter of producing an optimum number of children, but *one of the correct management of this age of life* . (ibid. 279, emphasis mine)

This “correct management” has ignored self-presentations and self-understandings of youth and children about how they experience social world. They symbolized unclear identities expected to be ‘good’ or ‘bad adults’ in the popular imagination of modernist progress in Western societies. Youth and childhood, thus, became the actors of “dreams” and “nightmares” of modern society at the same time (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2005; Foucault, 1976). What was the troubling issue about the category of youth is based on this unclarity of their development, and unexpected

and abnormal attitudes. In this sense, Comaroff and Comaroff (2005: 20) write that “youth stand for many things at once: for the terrors of the present, the errors of the past, the prospect of a future”. The category of youth, therefore, has been inscribed with experiences, failure and expectations of previous generations. This layered surface of youthfulness was not allowed to be combined with meanings of life that young individuals develop. For this reason, the absence of self-presentations of youth became abundant in sociological researches on youth. Their failures, actions and hopes in their life trajectories have been evaluated in wider categories of modern process in which youth has not found any space. To be sure, the process offered a promise of future to youth, based on a “narrative”, which Comaroff and Comaroff (ibid. 21) states, “according to which each generation does better than its predecessor”.

In the late twentieth century, however, youth have experienced the disillusionment with this narrative and institutions of modern state due to the exclusion of young people from spheres of neoliberal nation-states. Youth have been incrementally stayed out of economic restructuring, and considered conventional and institutionalized spaces inefficient to represent them and their problems. In the period, the ‘crisis’ of youth is not based on the failure of their integration due to deviant behaviours, but the fact that youth constitute the most excluded segment of the society and “embodies the contradictions of late capitalism” (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001; Neyzi 2001: 104). Within the context of the lack of regular employment, the inefficiency of educational system and tensions between generations, youth, in this period, began to experience the most radical conditions of capitalism. Failures of previous generation and new economic system was transferred to lives of youth, as if failures are derived from their lack of integration. Economic marginalization engendered the failure of an expected, and uninterrupted, development from childhood to adulthood. Conventional institutions of modern nation-state have failed to open up possibilities for youth to deal with vulnerabilities of the new period. Youth are distanced from nation state, creating a new space of actions and representations against it, which Jean and John Comaroff (2005) termed as “alien nation”. Prospects of modernity disappeared for youth, and individual success or failure have become the main theme in popular discourses.

At the same time, youth have gained an autonomous space to represent themselves. The period has witnessed the rise of “global youth cultures of expression, representation” and different forms of politicization (ibid. 21). With compelling



problems of the era, youth develop new identities based on different types of mobilization. In different regions of the world, youth have been at the forefront of post-colonial struggle. Moreover, as the most precarious segment, many research has focused on the recent self-expressions and new methods of coping with social suffering in different ways, including music, performance and styles (Neyzi, 2001). All of them shows that youth become distanced from conventional forms of representations, creating new spaces through communication technologies. It provides new networks through which youth could get rid of constraints of previous generations. With the rise of identity politics, youth drew from different sources to develop their consciousness. They have had freedom to experience historical changes differently from previous generations. This autonomous space for youth makes them a sociologically significant generation than ever before. Rather than passive outcomes of historical transformations, youth emerges as active subjects to deal with new promises and failures of the era.

In this sense, the category of youth should be considered in line with new youth identities in the same socio-historical period. Here, I consider Mannheim's conceptualization of generation to understand those identities. He argues that generation is not based on chronological period, but a generational consciousness of their experiences of a historical period (Mannheim, 1952). What make a generation significant is that destabilizing social and historical ruptures develop the specificity of a generation with a new understanding of social relations. These changes imbue a generation with new collective identities people of an age-cohort share. As Thiranagama points out, with the reference to Mannheim, "contemporaneity is transformed into sociological or political significance when destabilization or politicization occurs to such an extent that those experiencing them feel that they share a common set of historical or social problems" (Thiranagama, 2011: 44). With the embodiment of social changes differently, youth in this period is distinguished from older generations and began to carry out new impulses and collectivities unique to this generation. In different regions of the world, thus, youth in specific conditions produce different social attitudes around new collective experiences.

In this framework, I take youth as a generation in specific time and conditions. Youth in my research are organized around both collective experiences of violence and social suffering based on economic inequality and ethnic-racial discriminations in their lives. They experience them in different ways from other generations and create

different subjectivities to deal with them. Violence, growing economic inequalities and repressive policies of the Turkish nation-state open up a ground in which new collective identities flourish. In Okmeydanı, many young Alevi and Kurdish people experience the problems of long-term racial policies of Turkish nation-state and it coincided with vulnerabilities of neo-liberal economic policies. Urban youth gained new identities and approaches to structural problems which offer new possibilities and failures in their lives. Perhaps, youth in Okmeydanı constituted the most radicalized experiences of destabilization in Turkey. The shadow of violence in their everyday lives create new social experiences from different generations. Those experiences have created alternative public spheres for youth in Okmeydanı which contradict both kinship relations and the state.

In Turkey, therefore, the period after the 1980s have witnessed the different claims of youth. Leyla Neyzi analyses the construction of youth in Turkey in three periods. She writes that:

... [I]n the 1923-1950 period, youth came to embody the new nation. In the 1950-1980 period, youth were reconstructed in public discourse as rebels. Despite the change in discourse, educated young people in these two periods continued to identify with the mission of building a new nation in the name of the people. The post-1980 period, on the other hand, constitutes a rupture with modernist constructions of youth. Today, young people are increasingly able to express themselves through the new media, challenging their construction in public discourse, the established hierarchy between elders and juniors, and the mission imposed on them by adult society. (Neyzi, 2001: 115).

Thus, youth in Turkey, like in the world, today have ruptured with the promises of the modern nation state. They also do not react to historical changes in much the same way their parents do. The rupture of youth with from familial and conventional institutions constituted an unexpected space for urban youth. Collective experiences of the period in Turkey have shaped the meaning of being young in Turkey and created a common language urban youth speak. New subjectivities of youth began to emerge around those experiences through self-representations of their lives. Given the ruptures of youth and generational commonalities youth experience in the period, youth should be considered as a different generation with a distinct identity, rather than a transitory age-cohort. Youth in Turkey no longer embody 'dreams' and 'nightmares' of the society, but represent their failures and hopes as active subjects in the same society.

## Urban Youth in Okmeydanı

Youth in Okmeydanı have been associated with ‘terrorist’ groups in the public discourse. In the media, *Okmeydanlı* youth have been mapped out as partisans of illegal terrorist groups. They have become only visible with their masked images with conflicts with the police. Their actions have been considered as sporadic, ‘irrational’ and ill-conditioned activities. The media has presented them as ‘stone-throwing’ youth and setting fire to personal and public cars without any reason<sup>14</sup>. Youth in Okmeydanı has become embedded with the discourses of urban fear. Their politicization was framed as the ‘manipulation’ of illegal political groups.

After the 1990s, many children and youth migrated to metropolitan centers with their families. Especially, Kurdish children were being politically mobilized and their political struggle became the part of their everyday life not for only Kurdish political movement but also the struggle for their lives (Darıcı, 2011). In this period, the image of childhood as innocence was transformed into the uncanny presence of children in urban space (Gürbilek, 2011). They became the main actors of urban fear as the reason of unexpected dangers. Whether dangers are associated with political and/or economic motivations, childhood was depicted as “the objects of a class fear compounded by fear of the revenge despised children will one day wreak upon adults” (ibid. 135). ‘Street child’ image became abundant in newspapers and television channels to depict the problems of the city such as robbery, glue-sniffers (*tinerciler*), purse-snatchers (*kapkaççılar*).

The appearance of childhood as a dangerous figure has combined with the ignorance of public discourse about the imprisonment and killing of children for political reasons. The image of childhood and youth which is not in accordance with the popular depiction has become the responsibility of unconcerned families. Those children were depicted as being ‘exploited’ by political groups. In the legal area, families of ‘stone-throwing children’ have been accused of their failures to care of their children<sup>15</sup>. There was not any discussion about subjectivities of children and their motivations which attribute meanings to their struggle. It resulted in the extreme violence committed by state authorities in the regions which Kurdish people live and in dangerous neighbourhoods in metropolitan centers. Only in 2014, in a month's time, four children

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<sup>14</sup>[http://www.cihan.com.tr/haber/ozel-orgut-yandaslari-okmeydaninda-otomobil-yakti\\_7485-chmtm3nzq4nq==](http://www.cihan.com.tr/haber/ozel-orgut-yandaslari-okmeydaninda-otomobil-yakti_7485-chmtm3nzq4nq==)

<sup>15</sup><http://www.haber7.com/guncel/haber/1224892-tas-atan-cocuklarin-ailelerine-ceza-kesildi>

were killed by police fire in mass demonstrations of local people in Cizre, which is located at the southerneast region of Turkey<sup>16</sup>. In this period, the maltreatment of children in prison has also attracted the public attention<sup>17</sup>. The ignorance of the cruel attitudes towards children and youth in Turkey has started to haunt everyday lives of adults.

In this atmosphere, Okmeydanı has become the main source of urban fear in Istanbul associated with the threat of violence. As a violence-prone area due to clashes between political groups and police, it has witnessed the accelerating violence after the Gezi movement. The killing of a 14-years old child, Berkin Elvan, attracted both media and public attention, and yet, it triggered a discussion on whether he was a terrorist or not. The prime minister in that period, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, claimed that he situated his activities in the midts of ‘terrorist’ groups<sup>18</sup>. Although some of media instutions reacted against the event as an inhuman treatment of police, the incident was framed strictly in the image of an ‘innocent’ child. Again, the politicization of urban youth in Okmeydanı and their struggle in the political realm have been ignored by the public discourse.

Yet, there is a seeming contradiction between representations of public discourse and youth struggle in Okmeydanı. Problems urban youth face and their politicization are closely intertwined. The landscape of Okmeydanı provides a powerful ground for youth to requestion their lives. Political atmosphere also triggers conditons of destabilization of youth and renders new subjectivites prominent to make sense of their stories. Youth in Okmeydanı have experienced multi-dimensions of both structural and political violence. Their narratives, therefore, are embedded with histories of family, violence and Okmeydanı. Youth subjectivies are being formed around failures, expectations and possibilites those stories produce. To think about new subjectivies should be to look at self-representations of their vulnerabilities and questions they raise.

### **Self-Representations of Growing Up in Okmeydanı**

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/cizre-de-bir-ayda-dort-cocuk-oldu-gundem-1998846/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.evrensel.net/haber/114007/tbnin-sakran-cezaevi-raporu-taciz-tecavuz-siddet-rutinlesmis-durumda>

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/erdogan\\_berkin\\_elvan\\_terorist-1181324](http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/erdogan_berkin_elvan_terorist-1181324)

What does the spaces of Okmeydanı mean in imaginations of urban youth? In an affective environment, living in Okmeydanı constitutes main narratives of youth's life stories. Their narratives explain the degree of their belonging to the space and to what extent it is located in their lives. Many young people in Okmeydanı consider the district as a 'safe' place. This perception of protection from 'dangers' outside both creates physical/symbolic boundaries in Okmeydanı, and penetrates into self-narratives of being *Okmeydanlı*. Violence of both the police and political groups in everyday life also transform spatial boundaries of space (Feldman, 1991). Within physical/symbolic boundaries, youth channel their performances into urban space. This space emerges as "counter-public sphere" (Fraser, 1990) for urban youth to perform their actions and construct their identities. In framing the space through narratives of violence and resistance, space gives urban youth common language to create their own community. This language includes powerful, idealized and utopian features that strengthen the formation of the community.

Cognitive mapping of Okmeydanı is mediated by signs which refer to violence and resistance. From the streets to public parks located in Okmeydanı, many places bear traces of narratives of violence. Memories of deaths, resistance and violence are incarnated in urban space. It creates a very layered and transcendent space in which the past, present and future intermingles with each other. That being said, the space differs from the outside with the mythical construction. In Okmeydanı, the violent struggle of urban youth thus produce and reproduce symbolic/spatial boundaries through their performative acts. The space, therefore, is not given, but reappropriated by repetitive acts. Alan Feldman explains the relationship between performance and space. In the context of Belfast, he states that "the qualifying character of local sectarian space and ritual calendars endows the performance of crowd violence with the sanctified aura of historical reenactment. Space itself functioned as a mnemonic artifact that stored repertoires of historical narrative and collective action" (Feldman, 1991: 27). Thus, space has the capacity to reenact memory of collective violence and resistance and offer repertoires for subjects in the formation of subjectivities. Narratives spread through performances and self-representations of youth. It gives an unprecedented importance to space in its effects on agency. Space designated by violence emerges as an anchor through which youth construct their identities. That is the feature which makes space in Okmeydanı different from other spaces, as Feldman points out:

Ideological perception obtains a material charge from the force fields of politically codified space that directly mobilizes and channels action.. The destabilization of topos instigates the concentration of its value form in symbolic performances directed at the reordering of persons and place. [...] *[V]iolence emerges as a mnemonic for historicizing space and spatializing history. Historical imperatives are transferred from space to performance genres and the social actor as mobile parts of the spatial whole. There is a convergence in the materialization of historical identity in spatial constructs and the resort to material transformations of the social order through topographic violence.* (Feldman, 1991: 27, emphasis mine)

In this sense, spaces of Okmeydanı are experienced as “mnemonic” tools to enable subjects construct their identities again and again. The historical process of space is converged with biographies of subjects. Spaces in Okmeydanı is not imagined and experienced as external, but also actualized as internal through everyday engagements. Thus, while the struggle in Okmeydanı is also the struggle over the public space, yet this is not only spatial struggle in terms of appropriating urban space, but also, more importantly the struggle to maintain symbolic meanings over those spaces. Meanings actualized through performative acts in both actions and narratives gives a coherent construction of the self to youth. Narratives with which youth ascribe meanings to their subjectivities are actualized around symbolic meanings of space. Performances that gains value from the materialization of social space is transferred to, and embodied in, lives of subjects to frame their individualities. As narrative is also a performative act (Austin, 1962), it is crucial to consider how youth frame and narrate manners of living in Okmeydanı. What they extract from space determines how they situate the self in the spatial construction.

Judith Butler argues that performativity is very linked to subject’s identities. Codes, meanings and roles of identities is embodied by performances in the subject/body axis (Butler, 1993). Identity is constructed through performative acts. Thus identity is not given for once only, nor is performace a single act to construct an identity. Rather, it is embedded with lives of subjects. As Butler points out, “[p]erformativity is thus not a singular act, for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition” (Butler, 1993 : 12). It occurs in everyday activities, conversations and acts. It determines the repertoire of everyday life activities through which subjects construct their identities. Self-narratives and

performances become sources of our subjectivities. Identity is not given as an external role, but internalized through agency. Thus, in my context, young individuals frame themselves not only through being exposed to social space, but through reproducing themselves in their actions. As Butler (1990, 272) states, “one is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body and, indeed, one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well”. Youth gain their subjectivities by performance in clashes with police in urban space and self-representations to narrate meanings of belonging to the space. Thus connotations of being an *Okmeydanlı* youth in narratives are essential to form subjectivities of youth.

In thi sense, in my interviews, self-understandings of growing in Okmeydanı are also performative acts. Those understandings of the space underlie their construction of individualities. How they position the past and present of the space in their narrtives opens or restrict future possibilities. Sercan, a 23 years old male and born in Okmeydanı, make sense of Okmeydanı as the space exposed to potential danger of exclusion and state pressure.

Bu mahallede oturan her insan için ekonomik sıkıntılar oluyor birincisi. Gerek yasal olarak gerek ekonomik olarak devletin sürekli bu mahallede oturan insanlar üzerinde baskısı var. Ben mesela bu mahallede oturan, yetişen bir genç, gecekondü çocuğu olarak, hiçbir yerde iş bulma imkanı sağlayamadım. Hiçbir yerde doğru düzgün bir iş bulamadım. Okmeydanı öyle bir yer ki, bir yere iş sormaya gideceğin zaman nerde oturuyorsun denildiğinde, Okmeydanı dediğin anda 3-0 yeniksin zaten. Formu doldurmana gerek yok. Bana adam yalandan kağıdı uzatıyor. Form doldurtuyor yalandan. Kovmuyor ama çağırmayacak. Okmeydanı değdiği zaman iş bulamıyorsun.<sup>19</sup>

He relates living in Okmeydanı with precarius conditions. For Sercan, being an Okmeydanlı is articulated with his identity and this articulation makes him a potential suspect.

Bu mahallede oturan her insan potansiyel olarak sistem tarafından düzen tarafından suçlu. Potansiyel olarak suçlu yani. Şu mahallede oturan her insan için yarın ne olacağı belli değil. Bir bakmışsın sabah

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<sup>19</sup> Everone living in Okmeydanı has economic problems at the first place. There is a state pressure over people living here in both legal and economic terms. For instance, I, as a young who grew up here as a *gecekondü* child, did not find the oppurtunity to take a job anywhere. Okmeydanı is such a place that [...] when you are in a job interview and asked where are you from, and said I am from Okmeydanı, you are 3-0 defeated. You do not need to fill up a form. You are given the application form not seriously. You are not excluded from the application but you are not called. When you say Okmeydanı, you do not find any job.

saat beşte gelirler, evden alır götürürler. [...] Çünkü devlet bize yaşam hakkı tanımıyor. Birincisi ben aleviyim, ikincisi ben sosyalist bir insanım, üçüncüsü ben okmeydanında yaşıyorum. Devlet bana yaşama hakkı tanımıyor. Bunlar karşısında gebereceksiniz diyor, oraya yıkacağız diyor, öleceksiniz gebereceksiniz, gideceksiniz diyor.<sup>20</sup>

Belonging to the space in Okmeydanı generates powerful codes with which youth make sense of their lives. For, Gökhan, 17 years old male, Okmeydanı is a sacred place in which he could position himself from other areas in Istanbul. Growing up in an violent area prepares him for future life.

Diğer çocuklara göre bizimki biraz daha değişik geçiyor. Okmeydanı'nın temel şeyleri biraz daha olaylı olması. Bu şöyle etkiliyor, mesela normal semtdeki bir çocuğun daha, biraz daha ürkek çocuk olması varken, bizim burada büyüyen çocukların daha sert büyümesini sağlıyor. Daha cesaretli büyümesini sağlıyor. Bunun için, hatta Okmeydanı'nın yiğitleri derler, buradaki gençler için.<sup>21</sup>

The sacred feature of space in Okmeydanı constitutes a strong belonging in youth's imagination. It reorganizes symbolic space around the inside/outside distinction. This distinction not only emerges as physical boundaries, but also is codified through the emotional attachment of young people to Okmeydanı around purity/impurity distinction. As Feldman points out, "the entire symbology of purity and impurity [...] received a reifying substantiation in the inside/outside division of social space (Feldman, 1991: 35). Gökhan also narrates the division of social space in his mind with symbolic codes. As an Alevi youth, he feels an immense security in Okmeydanı albeit the constant police surveillance.

Okmeydanı Gazi gibi yerler Alevilerin genel olarak çoğunluk olarak yaşadığı yerler ve çok güvenli hissettiği yerlerdir. Çünkü burada, sanki burada devrim olmuş gibi. İnsanlar burada sünnesi, alevisi, kürtü de çok barışık bir şekilde yaşar yani. [...]Buradaki hiçbir insanın içine o kötülük sokulmamış, onlar kötülüklerden arınmış gibi mesela. Ama tabii ki buralara o kötülük yayılmaya çalışıyor.[...] Bugün Kasımpaşa'ya gidersek mesela, serseriden geçilmiyor. Birçok şey yani kullandıkları maddeler birçok şey var. Yani pıslığın içinde yaşıyorlar

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<sup>20</sup> Everyone in the neighbourhood is considered as usual suspects by the order (*sistem*). For people living here, what will happen tomorrow is not obvious. One day, they (police) could come to your house and you might be arrested at five o'clock in the morning. [...] Because the state does not acknowledge our rights to live. First, I am an alevi; second, I am a socialist; and third, I live in Okmeydanı. The state does not give me the right to live. In those conditions, it is said that the district will be destroyed and you will die and go away

<sup>21</sup> Unlike other children, our childhood are being experienced in a different manner. The main feature of Okmeydanı is that it is an eventful place. It affect in that while a child in a normal district becomes more timid, children growing up here becomes more tough. It make you grow up more bravely. For this reason, it is said manly youngsters of Okmeydanı for youth here.



mesela. Tamamı öyle ama, doğru düzgün bir yer yok. Bir de mahalleme geliyor toprağını öpesim geliyor. Bir tane bile insan bunun içinde bunu yapmaz. Bir genç bile mi merak etmez bunu.<sup>22</sup>

The perception of the space as a sacred place also is coincided with the fact that transgression of boundaries is more problematic and compelling in such a place. Thus, it makes the place a closed and “eulogized” space (Franco, 1985). The sacredness of the space comes from the sharp distinction such as inside-outside, neighbourhood/excluded space. The boundaries in Okmeydanı are shaped around both the presence of police forces and ethnic-religious separations in the inner areas of Okmeydanı. When I asked young people, they clearly draw the limits of their secured areas. It shows that the exclusive practices of police violence and the exclusion of other social spaces strengthen the inclusiveness of living space for urban youth, as “a space that is defended against ‘adverse forces’” (Feldman, 1991: 36). Violence of police and resistance of youth produce and reproduces both boundaries of the space and moral codes of living in Okmeydanı. Paradoxically, police violence emerges as the force to draw those boundaries. Dangerous and ‘no-go’ areas for police and state authority is, thus, reversed for local people in Okmeydanı. Transgression of boundaries becomes a compelling issue for young people due to the fear that there is a danger for them out there. This inclusiveness reproduces meanings and ethical codes around which youth construct their identities. That is why many of my interviewees tell ‘unexplained’ feeling of danger in encounters with other urban spaces in Istanbul. Thus this sacredness of the space is reproduced symbolic meanings of violence and resistance. For instance, a local park in Okmeydanı become the main node of clustering of young people. The struggle for the space, and even the name for the space, gains a sacred meaning. The name of the park bears this feature in the sense that local people denominate it as Sibel Yalçın Resistance Park in which a young woman clashed with police forces and was killed in a house near the park. Thus resistance, deaths and violence are main anchors of social life, creating a symbolic kinship in the space. As Franco argue in the context of Latin America, they emerges “states within states, or even counter-states, since there are certain parishes and certain families which have nourished traditions of resistance to the state and hold on to

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<sup>22</sup> Places such as Okmeydanı and Gazi neighbourhood are places where Alevi people populate highly and feel themselves very secure. Because it is as if a revolution happened. Here, Kurdish, Sunni, Alevi people live together peacefully. [...] Any evilness was not penetrated into anyone living here. It is as if they are purified from evilness. However, this evilness is tried to be spread out here. [...] For instance, let’s go to Kasımpaşa, the place has so many rascals you can’t swing a dead cat without hitting one. There are many drugs and bad things. They live in squalor. All of them are same. There are not any proper place. When I come to my neighbourhood, I want to kiss the land. Even one single person does not do that here (using drugs). Even one young person is not curious about that.

concepts of moral right” (Franco, 1985: 416). Symbolic forms and local ethics are materialized in sacred social spaces of Okmeydanı. The sacredness of the space is constructed again and again with an enclosing pattern of social life against potential dangers. For this reason, many young people have difficulty in articulating with other spaces in Istanbul. This sacredness of the space also closes different forms of sociability and possibilities for many of them. Though, as I said before, many local people came from different backgrounds, the space produce a symbolic kinship emerging around the identity of being *Okmeydanlı*. Halil tells this powerful attachment to the space when I asked him has he ever thought to live in another place.

O her zamanki şeyimiz, gerçekten. Düşünüyorum bazen keşke gitseydim keşke taşınınsaydım. Şimdi taşınan arkadaşlarımız da var ama yine buradalar, mahalledeler. Gidemiyorlar yani bir yere, illaki geliyorlar. Şöyle bir şey benim hapisanede bir arkadaşım vardı. Pendik’te yaşamış, ama mahallesini hiç bilmez, sevmez. Mesela bana sorardı ne yapacaksın, ben diyordum mahalleme gitmek istiyorum. Ya diyordu bu kadar mı seviyorsun mahalleni. Mahalle bizim vatanımız olmuş. Buradan dışarı çıkamıyorum. Çıkınca da çabuk sıkılıyorum. Hemen geri dönmek istiyorum. [...] Mahalle senin vatanın olmuş. Buradan çıkmak sana şey geliyor şah damarın kesilmiş gibi oluyor. Kimi dönemde de diyorsun yeter artık ya gitsem bu mahalleden, bıktım rezil, bir mahalle. Ama yok olmuyor işte onu kopartamıyorsun.<sup>23</sup>

In this sense, the feeling of security plays a pivotal role to enforce ties to the space. At the same time, it enclose the space to create its own language and ethical codes. Dangers out there are redefined and materialized the narratives of ‘degeneration’ (*yozlaşma*). The mythical construction of local life and dangers is utilized to imagine a community (Anderson, 1991). Sinan mainly gives references to the importance of ‘people’s culture’ in Okmeydanı and threats of degeneration against it. While the connotation of people’s or neighbourhood culture is not obvious and complex, for him, it is the main source which ties people to each other. The penetration of bourgeoisie

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<sup>23</sup> That is our common issue, really. I think sometimes that I wish I moved to another place. There are now some friends who moved to, but they are still here in the neighbourhood. They could not go to anywhere, they come here at the end. I had a friend in the prison. He lived in Pendik. He had nothing about his neighbourhood, he did not like it. He asked me what would you do after the prison. I was saying I want to return to my neighbourhood. He was saying do you like your neighbourhood that much. The neighbourhood became our country. We cannot go outside from here. As soon as I go outside, I get bored. I want to return immediately. [...] The neighbourhood became your country. Going outside from here seems to me as if my carotid artery is cut off. Sometimes, I say enough. I say I will leave the neighbourhood, I am tired, it is a horrible neighbourhood. But nothing happens, you cannot break your connection.

culture is the main threat to local life and the presence of police embodies the attempts of attack to popular culture.

Uyuřturucu satıcılar var bu mahallede. Polisin bunlarla iřbirlięi ierisinde olduęunu biliyoruz. Uyuřturucuyu mahalleye sokmak istedięini biliyoruz. Niye? Őimdi mesela bizim kltrmz var, mahalle kltrmz var. Halk kltrmzde ne vardır: dayanıřma vardır, birliktelik beraberlik vardır. Hazreti imam ali der ki komřusu aken tok yatan bizden deęildir. Bizim kltrmz de budur. Paylařırız herřeyi. Byle bir kltrn olunca ne olur, halk her zaman birlik iinde olur, dayanıřma iinde olur. Bu kimin iřine gelmez, insanların sırtından geinmek isteyen, eřmenin bařını tutmak isteyen, hep bana gelsin, hep bana gelsin, demek isteyen zenginlerin iřine gelmez. Onlar ister ki hepsi ayrı ayrı olsun, birlik beraberlik iinde olmasın, seslerini ıkartmasınlar, istedięim gibi onları kullanayım ister. nlerinde engel olan bu halk kltrne saldırıyorlar. Dayanıřmayı kırmak, birliktelięi beraberlięi, halk kltrnde olan direnme kltrn kırmak iin, bu kltre saldırıyorlar. Halk kltrne saldırı var, bunu da yozlařtırarak, uyuřturucuyu sokarak, geenlerin beyinlerini uyuřturarak yapıyorlar.<sup>24</sup>

The construction of ethical codes in local life changes the perception of justice. It creates new social actions specific to local life. To protect neighbourhood life, young people are being mobilized by especially political groups. In narratives of resistance, many young people are actively engaged with drug dealers, burglars etc. While the police is located around the neighbourhood, it does not serve daily problems of local life. In this absence, political groups constitutes their own security systems, so to speak. It results in the emergence of state-like practices in the neighbourhood. Rules and codes of the neighbourhood activates self-isolation of local people and more politicization of young people. Self-crime control also allows the state to marginalize the district (Parenti, 2000).

Emrah, 23 years old male, tells differences he experiences between inside and outside the neighbourhood. He is now studying at the universtiy and remembers the contradictions when he was studying at high school in Őiřli.

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<sup>24</sup> There are drug dealers in the neighbourhood. We know that police is cooperating with them. The police wants to permit drugs in the neighbourhood. Why? Because we have a culture, a neighbourhood culture. What is there in this culture? There are solidarity and unity. Imam Ali says that one, who is replete while one's neighbour sleep hungry, is not from us. This is our culture and we share everything. In that culture, what happens is that people live together in solidarity. Of whom it does not serve the purpose is the rich who want to exploit people, to earn everytime. They want that people do not come together and there is not any unity, people will not react against anything. For this reason, they attack popular culture that is an obstacle for them. To break the unity and solidarity and destroy the culture of resistance whic exist in popular culture, there is an attack to that culture through degeneration, permitting drugs in, narcotising the minds of young people.

En başta, ekonomik problemler var. Burada bir aile zor bela bir çocuk okutuyor onun cebine harçlığını koyuyor. Oraya gidiyorsun orada çoğu öğrencinin olmasa bile, bir devlet lisesi, çokta şey olamaz oradaki insanlar, ama o bastırılmışlıkla oradaki herkes, arkadaşlarım veya ben kendinimi, zengin gibi göstermek istiyorsun oralar. O gençlikte onu yaşamak istiyorsun açıkçası. Sonra çıkıyorsun buraya geliyorsun, bir yadırgama olmuyorsa da, abandone olmuşluk oluyor. Gerçeğinle tanışıyorsun çünkü. Oraya gidiyorsun rüya yaşıyorsun. Buraya geliyorsun, gerçeği yaşıyorsun.<sup>25</sup>

Self-presentation of living in Okmeydanı becomes the pivotal point on which youth construct their subjectivities. The understandings of local life affects the possibilities, allowing some into lives, restricting some. These narratives constitutes the starting point from which young people form political subjectivities or keep distanced themselves from those identities. In the next parts, I will investigate life stories in terms of family, political and strual violence, ethical and racial discriminations.

### **Family, Migration, Poverty : Inherited Failures**

My interviewees in Okmeydanı experienced perhaps the most compelling experiences of Turkey since the 1990s. They embody uncertainties of generational problems, poverty and exclusionary practices. More importantly, they feel distanced from the anchor of family to respond the question of what kind of a life they will have. They are deprived of regular relations expected to guide them. Although their lives embody contradictions and problems previous generation experienced, they are compelled to deal with the problems, that socio-historical changes produce, without stable references and conditions. In the context of destabilization of their lives, they had to remake new meanings and form new subjectivities by their own. Family has failed to understand experiences of youth, because youth do not share common language with their parents. They constitute an isolated generation from their parents. Many families experienced the problems of migration and growing poverty in ther lives. With the lack of stable conditions, growing up in this environment requires children to endure the problems with their efforts.

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<sup>25</sup> At first, there are economic problems. A family here manages with great difficulty to make children study. There, I and my friends, if not everyone, with suppression, pretended as if we were rich. In youthness, actually you wanted to live that. And then, when you return here, you feel abandoned, if not find odd. You encounter with your reality. Because you go there and live a dream. And when you come here, you live your reality.

Cemal is a 25 years old male who came to Okmeydanı from Bursa when he was seventeen. His life story revolves around stories of migration and ruptures of his family life accompanied with them. His life story begins in Elazığ, to which his families were forced to migrated from Tunceli due to the civil war in the 1990s. He was born in Elazığ and born to many economic problems his family had to deal with. Since has was a child, he had to manage to destabilizing conditions of a broken family. As a child, he strove to repair family relations.

Ailem aslen Tuncelili, Dersimli. Oradan 80 sonrası köy boşaltmalarından kaynaklı Elazığ'a göçüyorlar. Yani köy komple yakılıyor. Oradan ailecek, bizim köyün hepsi, Elazığ'ın bir mahallesine göçüyor. Ya şöyle Elazığ'da iki tane mahalle vardır merkezde; o mahaller bizim Gazi Mahallesi'nin Okmeydanı'nın birer kopyası gibidir. Bizimkiler oraya yerleşiyor. Ben orada doğdum 1989'de. Arkasından 94'de babam benden önce Bursa'ya gelmişti ekonomik sorunlar nedeniyle, 94'de beni de aldı yanına Elazığ'dan. 94'de işte kendimi bursa'da buldum.<sup>26</sup>

After his born, their parents were divorced because of his father's alcohol problem. Cemal took the responsibility of gathering up their parents. He struggled to construct a family relation without any help.

Annem babam ayrıydı o zamanlar. Annem Elazığ'da kaldı. Annem de sonra İzmir'e gitti, teyzemin yanına. Orada yaşadı. Biz bBursa'da amcamlarla kalıyoruz. Bir süre sonra ben 9-10 yaşına falan geldim tahminen, bir iki sene sonra yani. Elazığ'a tatile gittik. Annem de benim Elazığ'a geldiğimi öğrenmiş, o da İzmir'den binip Elazığ'a gelmiş. Babam beni göstermiyordu anneme. Geldi. Tabi annemle karşılaştık, annem baya ağladı üzüldü vs. Beni orada gördü. Geri dönecekti amcamlar. Ben gitmek istemedim. Annemi gördüm, annemin yanında kaldım. Gitmedim onlarla Bursa'ya Gemlik'e. Tabi babam ordan sürekli çağırıyor falan. Ben de o zaman çok detaylı hatırlamıyorum ama giderken annemi de aldım yanıma. Annem diyor sen çok ağladın falan, ben de geldim. Annem de muhteleme barışmak istiyor babamla. Babamın bir talebi olmadı yani. Ben annemi aldım. Bursa'ya gemlik'e götürdüm. Annem de yol bilmez, ben de bilmem ama bir şekilde eve kadar götürdüm.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>My family is originally from Dersim. From there, they migrated to Elazığ due to the evacuation of villages after the 1980s. That is, the village was completely burned down. From there, they with the whole family and even the whole village migrated to one neighbourhood of Elazığ. There were two neighbourhood in the center of Elazığ. Those neighbourhoods were the exact copies of Okmeydanı and Gazi neighbourhood. My parents settled there. I was born there in 1989. Then, my father came to Bursa due to economic reasons. After that, in 1994 he took me along to Bursa. I found myself in Bursa.

<sup>27</sup> My father and mother were seperated then. She stayed in Elazığ, and theni he moved to the sister of my aunt in İzmir. She lived there. We were staying in Bursa with my uncle. After a while, when I was nine or ten years old, we went on a holiday to Elazığ. My mother learned I came to Elazığ, and she also came to Elazığ from İzmir. My father

He took the responsibility of dealing with the broken family. He inherited vulnerabilities of forced migration and poverty and he became himself actively engaged with repairing the relationship between their parents. Rather than growing up in stable family, he navigated compelling problems of a failed kinship relation. In Bursa, his parents continued stable for a while in terms of familial and economic conditions. However, after a while, his father went bankrupt and started to consume too much alcohol again. His parents had to migrate to Okmeydanı for new job opportunities. As a successful student, Cemal managed to get into the chemistry department of the University. Following his parents, he planned to stay in Okmeydanı for a while until the opening of the university. Yet, in that period, he experienced the last radical rupture with his family. His father represents the failures he experienced in his life. According to his, his father worsened the problems Cemal struggled to deal with, let alone helping his future plans. In Bursa, he already became politicized through reading publications of revolutionary groups at the level of sympathizer, but at the same, he was planning to study at the university. He was planning to become engaged with political activities at the university. After coming to Okmeydanı, his plans failed. He was compelled to remake his future possibilities.

Örnektepe’de babam dükkan açmıştı. Babamla buluştuk. Babam dedi ki bu yaz boyunca bana yardım et, sonra okula gidersin dedi. Yardım etmeye başladık. Dükkanı ben bakıyordum. Babam elde kalan malzemelerle açmış. Çok fazla parası yok. Tabii o da tutmadı yaz sonu kapandı. Kapattık dükkanı. Babam okula göndermedi beni. Koptuk biraz hatta, tartıştık. Babama rest çektim bi yandan da. Bana çalış falan dedi. Dedim ben çalışmayacağım ama size de yük olmayacağım. Orada zaten kararımı vermişim devrimcilik yapacağım diye.<sup>28</sup>

It is important to consider that Cemal’s life was imbued with the unknowability of future. Every contradiction and failure based on economic and familial problem affect future possibilities and compel to search for new ways. The last rupture with his

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was not letting my mother see me. She saw me there. My uncles would return to Elazığ. I did not want to return. I saw my mother, I stayed with her. I did not go to Gemlik with them. Of course, my father was calling me. Then, I do not remember very well but, I took along my mother with me when returning to Bursa. She said that I came with you because you cried too much. I think my mother also wanted to be reconciled with my father. Yet my father did not make any request. I took along my mother to Bursa, Gemlik. Neither my mother nor I did not the way, but I managed to go home with her in some way.

<sup>28</sup> My father opened a store in Örnektepe. I went to my father. He offered me to help him during the summer, and then said that you could go to the university. I started to help him. I was looking after the store. My father opened the store with unsold inventories. He did not have too much money. And it also failed, we closed the store at the end of the summer. We closed the store and my father did not send me to the university. Our relationship was broken, we argued about that. I took a stand against my father. He said me to work. I said I would not work, but I would not also be a burden for you. I had decided then that I would become a revolutionary.

parents changed Cemal's life story dramatically. He did not find any hope in both education and stable life-style. He formed his subjectivity around political struggle and the political lanscape of Okmeydanı provided him with a new powerful language, along with new possibilities and failures, through which he constructed new collectivities. For Cemal, there did not occured any alternative ways on which he could construct future plans. He limited his life into the political struggle.

C : Hiçbir şey bilmiyordum o zamalar. Sonra hevesim kaçtı yani gitmek istemedim birden soğudum. Biraz da böyle geleceğe dair kendimi kapattım yani. Şöyle okul okurum, iyi bir kariyer yaparım vesaire böyle hayallere kendimi kapattım nedense. Devrimcilik yapacağım, ya bir yerde öleceğim ya da hapse gireceğim. Bu oldu, böyle oldu gelecek.

T: Neden böyle oldu peki?

C : Ya bilmiyorum. Üniversiteye mi güvenmedim, nedir. Devrimcilik yapma isteği vardı içimde onu arzuluyordum. Çok istiyordum. Okul okuyayım çocuklarım olsun, iyi bir hayat sürerim olsun işim olsun eşim olsun, hiç düşünmedim. Düşünmedim yani. Aşık oluyorduk vesaire ama hiç daha uzun soluklu planlar yapıyorduk. İşe gireyim çalışayım falan, hiç gelmedi benim aklıma. [...]Okul falan da istemiyorum. Biraz da babamın tavrı bende hayal kırıklığı yarattı. Onun da etkisi var. Hayal kırıklığı aynı zamanda bana fırsat sundu. Yani şu fırsatı sundu: aileme rest çekebilme fırsatı sundu. Çünkü babam bana söz verip sözünü tutmadı, benimde ona karşı benim böyle bir yaşamı seçme hakkım var, bunun sorumlusu ben değilim deme şeyim var. Halen de babam benim yüzüme bakamaz, onun şeyini söyler benim yüzümden oldu der babam. O konuda babam eziktir. Bana kalkıp bir kere bile fırça atmaz, niye çalışmadın, niye birşey yapmadın diye, fırça atamaz yani konuda.<sup>29</sup>

The failures of Cemal's life shaped by both familial and economic problems gave him to new oppurtunities. Those oppurtunities came to Cemal's life through living in Okmeydanı. Unlike conventional expectations, Cemal found new ways to form his

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<sup>29</sup>C: I did not know anything at that time. That is, I lost my interest. I did not go to the universtiy. Moreover, I became withdrawn into myseld. I closed myself to the dream that I would finish the university and build a good career. Somehow, I thought that I would become a revolutionary, and either I would die somewhere or I would be imprisoned. Thus my future came to that way.

T: Why did it came to that?

C: I do not know. Maybe I did not trust in the university. I had a motivation for becoming a revolutionary, I was desiring that. I wanted to much. I did never think to study at university, have a good life, children, a wife. I never thought. I was falling in love occasionally, but I was not making long-termed plans. Things, like starting a job, never came to my mind. [...] I did not no longer want to enter to the university. My father's attitude also made me disappointed. It had also effect on that. At the same time, this disappointment offered me with an opportunity in that it gave me the oppurtunity of taking a stand against my family. Since my father gave a promise to me and broke his promise, against him, I have a right to choose this kind of life and I can say that this is not my fault. Even now, he could not encounter with me about the issue. He said that it happened because of my fault. On this respect, he is contrite. He does never criticized me for not working.

subjectivity. Many young people, like Cemal, faced problems of social suffering, and yet, they also found many alternative ways to engage with them. Okmeydanı is, therefore, a very specific location to offer powerful promises in mobilizing young people against inherited problems. As his narratives shows, the lines between political struggle and life are very blurred. The oscillation between choices are triggered by destabilized group of family relation.

However, the changes of migration could end in unexpected ways. Dilek is a 23 years old female, migrated from Muş when she was 9 years old. She and her family also experienced the pressures of the civil war in the Southern East of Turkey, but the main reason of migration was blood vengeance. For Dilek, the main trouble in her family has become gender issue due to her father's repressive attitude. She remembers her and his older sister position in the family when she came to Istanbul:

Babam zaten genelde son 3 senedir kendi öz evlatlarını benimseyen biri. Genelde benim amcamın çocuklarını benimseyen biri. İşte onlar hep doğru çünkü onlar erkek gibi. Doğu'da erkeği çok düşün oldukları için, senin tek suçun işte kız olarak dünyaya gelmen. Hani bana sorsan bir daha dünyaya gelmek ister misin? Asla. Çünkü böyle bir dünya hayal etmiyorum. Ben buraya ait olmadığımı gerçekten bazen hissediyorum.<sup>30</sup>

The problems which entrapped Dilek into gendered limits of family, yet, started to be transcended with a new agency. She gained freedom to engage with her life through contributing to the family economy immensely. After the migration, her father did not work in any long-term job due to health problems, and she and her sister emerged main actors to maintain family economy on a stable ground. Her contribution to family economy gave her new tools to negotiate her position with the family. As a child, she recognized the role of economy for her individual life.

İşte bir gecekonduya geldik. Kira falan derken, o zaman amcamın çocukları ile yaşıyorduk. 3 tane erkek, ben, annem babam kardeşlerim. Onlar işte konfeksiyonda çalışıyorlardı. Ben tabi okula gitmiyorum. Sadece işte evdeyim. Sürekli bir şeyler yapmak istiyorum ama ne yapabilirim? Benim amcam pazarda çalışıyordu. [...]Çorap satmaya başladım. Bir şekilde ticarete her zaman para var, onu o an o gün anladım yani. Yani aldığım çoraplardan kazandığım, o zaman günlüğü

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<sup>30</sup> My father was a person who has embraced his own children since the last three years. Usually, he cared of children of my uncles. They were right because they were boys. Since boys are doted upon by families in the East, your single fault is to be born as a girl. If you ask me to reborn to this world, I say never. Because I do not dream such a world, I do not belong to this world.



100 TL'ye gelmişti. Eve gittiğim zaman, alışveriş falan yapmışım. Tabi, babam sigara falan da içiyor. Alışveriş yaptım ekme aldım, sigara aldım, eve mutfığa ne lazımsa işte.<sup>31</sup>

In that way, Dilek started to gain a relative autonomy in the family, which she did not have at first, through bringing in more money. Besides freedom in her life, it also gave her new responsibilities. Dilek narrates her life story around her individual struggle and success. Migration to Istanbul was chance for her to construct her life with the decreasing pressure of the family. Her individuality constituted her subjectivity, and at the same time, closed herself to emerging collectivities in Okmeydanı, which I will return in detail in Chapter four. She keeps herself distanced from her hometown now and emphasizes opportunities the migration gave her. Those opportunities lead her to reconstruct the East in her imagination.

D : Doğuda mesela halen başlık parası var halen berdel var. Halen kız çocuğuna sormadan, işte abartısız söylüyorum ,15 yaşındaki çocuğun, 30 yaşındaki adamla evlendirildiğini biliyorum yani. Hani bazı şeylere, bunlara şahit olduğu zaman... Bazen doğuda intiharlar çok olduğu zaman, bu kızlar niye canına kıydı diyorlar Asi ruhlu insanlar bazı şeylere tahammül etmediği zaman tek çıkışı olarak ölümden medet buluyor. Öleyim kurtulayım ama öyle de çok yanlış. Yani böyle bu tarz hikayeler çok var. Hikaye değil gerçekler maalesef. O yüzden çok şükür ben bazılarına baktığım zaman, kendi ayaklarımızla, biz zor şartlarda da olsaydı, bir noktaya geldik. Bazılarında baktığım zaman kıyasladığım zaman iyi ki de İstanbul'a gelmişiz, iyi ki de ben bu zorlukları yaşamışım. Allah korusun, ya 30 yaşındaki adamla evleneydim.

T: O zaman istanbul herşeye rağmen sana bir özgürlük sundu?

D : Tabii ki. İstanbul gerçekten şans. Şanslılardanım ben.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> We came to a gecekondu. Due to the rent, we were living together with children of my uncles. [...] There were three boys, me, my father, mother and sisters. They were working in the manufacture of ready-made clothes. I was not going to the school. I was just at home and I was always struggling to do something but what could I do? My uncle was working in bazaar. [...] I started to sell socks. I realized that day that I could have always money through trading. That is, with those socks, I made 100 TL money that day. When I went home, I had bought some things. Of course, my father was smoking. I bought bread, cigarette, whatever household needs.

<sup>32</sup>D: In the east, there are still brideprice and bride exchange. I know that, I am saying without exaggeration, fifteen years old girls are being compelled to marry with thirty-years old men without asking her opinions. When you witness this kind of events... Sometimes, when the rate of suicide is high in the east, it is asked that why girls committed suicides. When free spirited individuals do not endure to some things, they find the only way through death. They think that I will be dead and freed, but this way is also very wrong. There is plenty of this kind of stories. It is not a story, it is truth. Therefore, fortunately, when looking at some of them, we (she and her sister) managed to reach to a point in harsh conditions. Comparing myself to them, I am so glad that we came to Istanbul and I experienced those hardships. What if I was married to a thirty-years old man?

T: Then, do you think that Istanbul offered a freedom for you?

D: Of course. Istanbul is a chance. I am the lucky one.

As I mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, historical changes had direct affect on lives of urban youth. Common experiences of *Okmeydanlı* youth are based on structural poverty with the lack of education. It worsens the unpredictability of future. In broken relations in family, youth search for new ways to endure to social and economic problems. Every time, urban youth requestion the limits of inherited world. The direct impacts of uncertain conditions are embodied in the lives of urban youth through exploding which Veena Das terms as “the grammar of everyday life” (Das, 2007). Halil, who was a 27 years old male and born in Okmeydanı, remembers his experiences shaped around his fragility of economic and familial conditions. His narrative shows how he frames his poverty in Okmeydanı.

Liseyi bitirdim zar zor da olsa. Okul hayatı şöyle aslında, o yönden de aileme çok kızgınım. Gerçi onların da çok suçu yok. Yoksulluk sonuçta. Para yok pul yok, orta okulda sınavlar oluyordu bilirsin. Ben o sınava girecektim, giremedim mesela. daha çok para veremeyiz dediler. Çok zorlu geçti benim çocukluğum. Yoksulduk. Babam çok kötü kumar oynuyordu. O yönden kötüydü. O sınava giremedim, girseydim kazanır mıydım bilmiyorum.<sup>33</sup>

Self knowledge of poverty and the framework of how he presents his problems also construct narrative of possible choices in Okmeydanı. What is behind his future imagination is related with how he makes sense of his failures. This interpretation draws the limits of possibilities emerged in Okmeydanı. For him, there were some rigid ways to live in Okmeydanı.

Şunu o zaman, aslında beynine yerleştiriyorsun:yoksulsun, 1-0 hayata yenik başlamışsın, okuyamayacaksın, ailenin durumu belli. Ya devrimcilik yapacaksın bizim mahallemizde, Okmeydanı'nda, ya düzenin içinde olacaksın. Yani düzen dediğim illa ki kötü anlamda söylemiyorum. Gidersin çalışırsın. Evine gelirsin işine gidersin evlenirsın çoluğa çocuğa karışırsın. Hayatın böyle devam eder. İkincisi çalışmazsın, serseri gibi sokakta sürtersin, ekstra uyuşturucuya falan bulaşırsın. Bu ya da devrimcilik yapacaksın. Başka seçenek yok. Biz de bunu seçtik. Devrimciliği seçtik.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>I finished high school, though just barely. Actually, in terms of school life, I am angry with my family. This is not their fault, though. This is poverty in the end. We had no money. There was the exam (for high school) in secondary school, you know. I would enter the exam but I could not, for instance, my family said that we cannot afford too much money. My childhood went through a rough patch. We were poor. My father was gambling badly. That was rough in that way. I could not enter to the exam. If I entered to it, I do not know whether I passed the exam.

<sup>34</sup> Even in that time, you put that into your mind: you are poor, you could not study, you start your life with the defeat, the condition of your family is obvious. Either you will become a revoulionary in our neihgbourhood, Okmeydanı, or your will be in the routine. That is, I do not mean that routine is not necessarily a bad thing. You can work and come to home. You can be married and have children. Your life goes on in that way. In the second, you can

Those options in the midst of precarious conditions provide him for some ways to form his subjectivity. To be sure, these are not only options in Okmeydanı. Rather his interpretation of his past shaped the ways through which he constructed future possibilities. For Halil, political struggle compensated his problems in the family. He could have replaced his compelling relations with the family with new collectivities in the struggle. He compares his unstable family life with new friendships. Halil found new meanings in political struggle he could not find in his family.

Bu insanların samimiyetin, sana karşı olan samimiyetini sevgisini görüyorsun, kopamıyorsun. Hapishanede de öyleydi mesela. 30-35 kişiydik. Ben mesela hep söylerim, belki basit gelecek ama, yeni yıl kutlamaları, hapishanede çok bambaşka geçiyordu. Bayram kutlamaları çok bambaşka geçiyordu. Mesela işte bizim aileden sana örnek vereyim, bayramlarda ne olurdu mesela bizim evde: sabahları kimse olmaz, babam çeker erkenden gider. Annem olursa olur, kardeşim olursa olur. Kimse kimseyle doğru dürüst bayramlaşmazdı. Ama bunu ben hareketin içinde yaşadım. Dışarıda da öyleydi. Tutuklanmadan önce bayramlar olduğu zaman, minibüs tutardık giderdik Armutlu'ya. O zamanlar ölüm orucu süreci Armutlu'daydı. Onları ziyaret ederdik. Evleri ziyaret ederdik. Hapishanede de bu böyleydi birbirine not yazmalar, şeker yollamalar çikolata yollamalar bayram kutlamaları, halay çekmeler.<sup>35</sup>

Family is also a pressure source for young people, especially female ones. Sometimes, parents do not attempt to understand everyday struggle of youth. Moreover, they fail to satisfy questions young people raise out. This incomprehension is combined with the pressure of families that imposes expectations on youth. Yeşim, a 17 years old female, has experienced a very troubled relationship with her parents, especially her father. For her, he symbolizes anger and frustration in her life. She has been actively engaged with a legal political institution. This engagement reversed the distinctions between street and home, and public and privacy. She experiences street and the institution to express herself freely. For her, home is no longer a private space, but the outside of home is a suitable space to gain a personal identity. This political and social interaction with the landscape of Okmeydanı open up new possibility to react against both paternal pressure and uncertainties of her life. In this sense, the spaces of

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wander around the streets as a rascal, additionally you can be addicted to drugs. That is it, or becoming a revolutionary. There is no other possibility. We chose the latter. We chose to become revolutionary.

<sup>35</sup> You see the sincerity and love of those people to you. You cannot break the relationship. This was also the case in the prison. We were thirty-three five people. I say always that, it seems simple maybe, but new year and bayram (religious festivals) celebrations occurred differently. Take my family, what happened in the family in bayrams is that my father left the house too early, only my brother and mother were celebrating occasionally. But I lived that in the movement. Before the imprisonment, we used to take a cab and go to Armutlu to visit people in the death fast action. We visited to houses. In the prison too, we were sending notes, candies to each other and dancing the *halay*.

Okmeydanı provide an opportunity to reconstruct her private sphere. Her political action is embedded with her struggle against the family. Her health condition was worsened due to high anxious and stress. When I asked her whether it was because of witnessing violent activities, her answer was the increasing pressure of her family.

Şiddetin baskısını bıraktım. ailemin baskısından daha çok kötü etkileniyorum. Onlar yüzünden de biraz daha kötü oldum. Sürekli mesela kuruma gitme, şöyle yapma, böyle yapma, eylemlere gitme. Kadın eylemine gidiyorum, ona bile laf ediyorlar. Ben babamdan nefret ederim. Cinsiyetçi bir insandır. Sen ondan ayrı olabilmek için evlenip, başka bir yere gitmen gerekir. Kadın eylemine gittiğimde mesela, bir sürü küfür etmişti. Nefret ediyorum kısaca. Annem biraz daha ılımlı bu konuda. Ama o da korkuyor. Babamın dediği bir sürü şeyi yapıyorum küçüklükten beri mesela. Bana verdiği sözleri tutmuyor ben de artık ona verdiğim sözleri tutmuyorum.<sup>36</sup>

She is frustrated with family expectations. Her narrative shows that she feels distanced from the family due to broken promises and failures of her family to help her guide her life.

Ailem ne bekliyor benden? Okuldan eve evden okula. Sosyal bir yaşantın olmasın, robot gibi yaşa. Düşündükleri hep, kendi kafalarında bir tane çocuk hayal ediyorlar. Onu bana şey yapmaya çalışıyorlar. Ev kızı diye düşünüyorlar ya. Ev kızı temizlik yapar şunu yapar, bunu yapar. Ben hiçbirini yapmıyorum. Babasının kızı mesela, biraz şey olur evde oturur her dediğini yapar, ayaklarını yıkar işte vesaire. Ben hiçbirini yapmam. Babamla bir sürü tartışma olmuştur bu konuda.<sup>37</sup>

She have the possibility to channel her anger with the family in the political institutions. The place becomes the ground in which new collectivites and friendships could emerge. Again, she also replace the problematic relations in the family with new networks. Thus, Yeşim found many ways to 'choice' new relations to deal with her problems. This estrangement from family could occur in new networks through which youth gain autonomous spaces.

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<sup>36</sup> I do not count the pressure of violence. I am being affected by the pressure of my family. Because of them, my healt has got worsened more. Always, they say me not go to the instution, not to do this, not to go to political protests. When I go to protests for women, they react to even that. Actually, I hate my father. He is a sexist person. To live away from him, you should marry with someone and then go away. For instance, when I went to the protest for women, he swore at me. I hate him in short. My mother is more moderate person, but she also fears. Since I was a child, I have done many things my father wanted me to do. However, he does not keep his promises, and now I does not keep mine anymore.

<sup>37</sup> What does my family expect from me? They expect me to go to school and return to home, not to have a social life and to live as a robot. What they think is that they imagine a child and try to impose that on me. They thought me as a house-girls: that is, cleaning home and doing this or that. I do not do anything. The father's daughter does some things, such ash staying at home, do whatever he wants, washing his feet. I do not do any of them. We discussed many times about the issue.

Burdaki arkadaşlarım da kardeş gibi, ağabeylerimde de öz ağabeyim gibi. Sen burayı sadece gelip gittiğin yer olarak görmeyeceksin. Aile olarak göreceksin. Kan bağından öte bir şey zaten. Hani kendi ailemi kendim seçmem ya, burada kendi ailemi kendim seçiyorum. Kendi kardeşimi kendim seçmem ya, kendi kardeşimi ben kendim seçiyorum.<sup>38</sup>

In short, breakdowns in family relationships are one of the main reason which make youth search for new collecitivities. In Okmeydanı, youth specifically could find new networks shaped around political struggle. Under the condition that economic stability could not be transferred to their children anymore in the present, many families were not an essential point to which youth attach their imaginations. Nor did they give sufficient answers to structural problems of urban youth in the era. Conventional spaces and ways are inefficent to predict a stable future for urban youth. The endurance for vulnerabilities makes youth search for new network which link the present to the future. In Okmeydanı, revolutionary groups have emerged as a ground in which youth gain new identities and represent themselves. The narratives of Cemal and Halil shows that their embodied contradictions of families are negotiated through the engagement with political struggle. Or, as in Dilek's narrative, it occurs in new individual ways. Every time, the destabilization of family relations results in the reformation of the self in different possibilities. The question of how they choice alternative ways is based on how they frame their experiences. The linkage between the past and the future, which differs in every different narrative, affects their perfoances in the present. Failures in family relations do not always necessarily shape subjectivities in the same manner, but the positioning of young people by themselves in the future both opens up or blocks some alternatives. The family relations are always requestioned and reconstructed in and for the present. The different meanings youth ascribe to kinship relations provides possibilities for them in search of new collective or individual ways.

## **Experiences of Being an Alevi While Growing Up**

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<sup>38</sup> Here, my friends are like my siblings, my older male friends are like my brothers. You should not consider the place as only a location to which you come and go. You should see it here like a family. It is besides blood tie. Just as you could not choice your own family, I choose my family here by myself. Just as you could not choice your sibling, I chose my siblings here.

Alevism<sup>39</sup> has come usually to the public agenda with bloody massacres since the 1970s. Yet, what is absent in public discourses is the reflections of ingrained discriminations of Alevi people in pejorative ways in everyday life. It has been considered as a threatening sect against Sunni-Islam ideology in terms of both religious interpretations and practices. Moreover, in the historical context of Turkey and Ottoman Empire, it has been also associated with a dissident religious minority against the central authority, which I will turn in detail in the next chapter. What I discuss here is the ‘cultural’ connotations of Alevism in public discourse and reflections of them in everyday life of youth.

Alevism is a sect in Islam with more liberated rules of religious practices. What differs it from other sects in Islam is that it reframes spiritual codes of Islam and does not necessitate strict rules of the orthodox Islam, such as fasting (*oruç tutmak*), performing five time prayer (*5 vakit namaz kılmak*), etc. Moreover, in Alevism, mosque is not an essential sacred place for them, which Sunni Islam obliges Muslims to go and pray ritually. Thus, Alevi people are mainly discriminated as those who are not going to mosque and consider it as a sacred place. Rather, *Cemevi*<sup>40</sup> is a place of gathering for Alevi people. Even *cemevi* is framed in public discourses of Sunni Islam as a ‘deviant’ of Islam tradition because it is considered as the place in which necessities of Islam are not performed. The legal recognition of *Cemevi* as religious place has become the main debate in Turkey. Any governments so far have not given any religious status to *Cemevi*, but rather considered as ‘cultural centers’. Moreover, ‘ruptures’ or so-called ‘deviants’ of Alevism from Sunni-dominated Islam are reproduced in discourses about *Cemevi*. Unlike mosques, Alevi men and women could worship ‘together’ at the same time and place. In religious practices, this non-gendered aspect of Alevism again has seemed as violation of Sunni-Islam rules. This liberated framework of Alevism has also moved beyond from religious connotations to social and cultural sphere. It has become as a ‘threat’ against the society. Since Alevi people in the Ottoman Empire had to hide their identities and live in their enclosed communities, lives of Alevi people has been associated with ‘incest relations’. Their religious practices in a non-gendered environment and isolated lives has combined with the ‘mythical’ construction of their ‘otherness’ (Hall, 1997). In one of them that Alevi people perform ‘incest relations’,

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<sup>39</sup> As Leyla Neyzi points out, referring Olsson et al. (1998), “[h]istorically, Alevism has been defined in opposition to Sunnism as well as being identified with opposition to central authority” (1999: 8).

<sup>40</sup> *Cemevi* is a sacred and fundamental place to worship in Alevi-Bektaşî tradition.

their lives has been discriminated and humiliated as the ultimate violation of societal rules, i.e. the violation of “incest taboo” (Lévi-Strauss, 1969). The reference to this violation has become ingrained in the pejorative representation of Alevism in both covert and overt manners. The term *mumsöndü*<sup>41</sup> has sometimes come to the public discourse to signify the myth of incest relations in Alevism. This pejorative term desecrates the very religious practices of Alevi people and reproduces the idea that this sect could not be a part of Islam, and also, is used to present how ‘deviant’ Alevi people are. In this sense, Alevism has been associated with a threatening opposition against Sunni-dominated Islam and the ‘integrity’ of the society in conversations of everyday life. It becomes an image of ‘deviant’ and/or dissident sect in public discourses of the society in the historical construction of myths of Alevi’s otherness.

Myths of Alevism in the society become ‘realities’ in the cycle of routine conversations and encounters (Barthes, 1972). As Barthes points out, what is behind of myths in terms of historical and social trajectories becomes evaporated, and they become ‘essential’ conditions of the Other (Hall, 1977). In this fixation of essential features of the Other, Alevi youth in Okmeydanı experience discriminating conversations in their lives, and have to struggle to defend their identities against biases in advance. Their lives start with this stigmatization, and reversing connotations of Alevism becomes compelling, and mostly impossible, struggle. Although the establishment of the republic of Turkey combined with the secularization project, Alevi identity has continued to be discriminated in ‘hidden’ discourses of the state. In the massacres since the 1970s, those discourses have become apparent in the most brutal form, along with the continuation of dereliction of the state, to say the least, or the protection of perpetrators of massacres. Although the Turkish state has positioned itself against ‘radical’ Islamic groups as a threat against the Republic, it reframes and reproduces Islam as Sunni-dominated religion within its boundaries. After the 1980 coup d'etat, the implementation of obligatory religion lesson determined the content of lessons in the Sunni framework. It epitomizes the State discourse in the appropriation of Sunni-dominated Islam ideology that has continued so far. The issue that Alevi students are also obliged to take religion lesson is now still the one of the most clashes between Alevi community and the State. For now, there are many ongoing cases in the juridical

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<sup>41</sup> *Mumsöndü* is a pejorative term related with so-called ‘deviant behaviours’ of Alevi people. It mainly refers to ‘incest interactions’ of Alevi men and women in their religious practices.

realm for many Alevi families to struggle to remove this obligation in educational system.

For my concern, it is important to reflect upon experiences of Alevi youth with discriminating conversation in their lifes. Okmeydanı is a secure place for Alevi community in terms of expressing their identities. Yet, in encounters with other public spaces, Alevi identity is a problematic issue for youth to be expressed. One of those public spaces, school is the most prominent one in which youth experience troubles with their friends and teachers. Buket, a 18 years old female, remembers a conversation between her teacher and an Alevi friend.

Şu güne geldim halen, Aleviyim diyemediğim arkadaşlarım oldu. İnsanlar öyle bir algılamış ki Aleviliği, öyle bir beyinlerine sokmuşlar ki, dinsizler, gavurlar diye. Bu algı ile yaklaşıyorlar. Mesela benim bir din öğretmenim vardı dokuzuncu sınıftayken. Bir arkadaşım ile sohbet halindeydik. arkadaşım şey demişti “Hocam, Hazreti Ali için Allah’ın aslanı diyorlar, doğru mudur” demişti. Verdiği tepkiyi hiç unutmuyorum, “Alevi misin” diye sordu hocam. Arkadaşım “Evet hocam, Aleviyim” dedi. Hoca da “Peki sen namaz kılmayan, oruç tutmayan, Allah'a inanmayan, sadece Ali'ye inanan Alevilerden misin? Eğer onlardansan, bu sorunun cevabının senin için hiçbir önemi olamaz. Otur!” demişti. Ardından bir sonraki derste bu arkadaşımıza zorla kelime-i şahadet getirmişti. Bende izliyorum. İnanın hiçbir şey yapamadım çünkü o kadar ani gerçekleşti ki. Çünkü gözlerinde öyle bir nefret vardı ki, ben korktum. Gerçekten korktum. Ne yapacağımı bilemedim. sadece izlemekle yetindim. Bu insanın onurunu çok dokunuyor. Çünkü hiçbir şey yapamıyorsun. Gelmişsin yirmibirinci yüzyıla, insanlar hâlâ bu düşüncedeler. Halen kendilerinde olmayanı aşağılama, kendilerinden olmayanı ötekileştirme durumundalar. Çok korkmuştum. İğrenmişim ve utanmışım.<sup>42</sup>

In the school, she was shocked at this kind of conversation. Her feelings oscillate between fear, shame and anger. This kind of experience made her to hide her identity in routine conversations in her life. Although her Alevi identity is safe in Okmeydanı and

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<sup>42</sup> So far, I have still some friends whom I could not say I am Alevi. People have perceived it in a such way that, Alevism has been thought as nonbelievers or infidels (gavurlar). They approach it with this perception. For instance, I had a religion teacher when I was at ninth class. I had a conversation with my friend. She said to the teacher that “Teacher, it is said for Hz. Ali to be the lion of Allah. Is that true?”. I do not forget his reaction to it. He said “Are you alevi?”. Then, my friend said “Yes, I am Alevi”. And he said “Well, are you one of those Alevis who do not perform prayer, fast, believe in Allah, and do only believe in Ali? If you are one of them, the answer of this question does not matter for you. Sit down!” After that, in the next lesson, he urged forcibly her to perform Kelime-i Şahadet (islamic confession of faith). I was just looking that. Believe me, I could not do anything because it happened in a minute. Because he had so anger in his eyes that I was afraid. I was really afraid. I could not know what to do. I just looked. I mean this insults one’s dignity because you could not do anything. In the twenty-first century, people have still this thought. They are still in the position of humiliating and otherizing those who are not one of them. I was afraid. I was ashamed and I was disgusted.



the family, in Istanbul, school is a very disturbing place to express this identity. She could not be exempt from obligatory religion lesson, and in these lesson, there is always the danger of the exposition to Sunni-Islam ideology in pejorative manners, as her friend experienced. Collective memory of Alevi massacres is ever present in her family. When I asked whether she knows anything about Alevi massacres, her example about Sivas massacre is interesting: “I do not remember, yet probably, I was born with that knowledge.”<sup>43</sup> Fear and anxiety is transferred into lives of youth from the very beginning.

How is the knowledge of being Alevi argued, and what does the family offer young people to live with that knowledge? Mostly, families warn youth to hide their Alevi identities to protect possible exclusion and discriminations. Yet the question of why it should be hidden remains unanswered, or families provide superficial explanations. Youth are again deprived of answers of problems of their social worlds into which they were born. Of course, this concealment is doomed to failure. In very heterogeneous structure of schools in Istanbul, youth is inevitably compelled to witness discriminations based on identities. They manage to get rid of those problems on their own. Yeşim remembers warnings of her family not to reveal her identity. She could not understand the reason. Nor did her family give a sufficient explanation.

Y : Sakın alevi olduğunu söyleme diyorlardı. Bizi sevmiyorlar diyorlardı. Bende niye bizi sevmiyorlar ya falan diyordum. Gideceğim söyleyeceğim diyordum. Gittim söyledim. Söyledikten sonra da bunlar başıma geldi zaten. Sekizinci sınıfa kadar ben çok zorlandım. Din dersine girmek istemiyordum. Okulda sürekli devamsızlık yapıyordum. Din hocası benden nefret ediyordu. Gördüğü zaman direk suratını asıyordu. Nefret ettiğini anlayabiliyordum gözünden.

T : Peki Alevi olduğunu her zaman söyleyebiliyor muydun?

Y: Belli bir süreye kadar söyleyemiyordum. Acaba nasıl bir tepki verecekler şeyi vardı hep. Söyledikten sonrada tepkilerini gördüm.

T: Neler gördün?

Y : Tek kaldım yalnız kaldım. Konuşulmadı benle sekizinci sınıfa kadar, Alevi olduğum için. Sinir oluyordum. Dua falan da okumuyordum.

T : Peki ailen bunların sebebini söylüyor muydu?

Y : Ben hiçbir zaman net bir cevap alamadım. Hani sordum ne yapacaklar diye. Küçük görüyorlardı belki de. Cevabını

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<sup>43</sup> Ben hatırlamıyorum. Ama, galiba bu katliamı bilerek doğdum.

söylemiyorlardı. Ama öğrenmiş oldum. Kendim araştırdım. Alevi mezhebinesin sen. Bu mezhep sebebiyle de kabul edemeyenler insanlar var.<sup>44</sup>

Gökhan also remembers exclusion and discriminations in the school. His experience did not only occur with school teachers, but more importantly, with routine conversations with friends. For a long time, he could not make sense of this ‘inherited’ segregation with their friends. In his experiences, being Alevi is connoted with both religious and political features, such as being an atheist and possible terrorist in the future.

Mesela biz çok küçükken, daha böyle üçe dörde gidiyorken, orada yaşadım ben, “sen Alevisin, senin yemeğin yenmez” gibisinden laflar. 10 yaşındaydık hepimiz. Çok çok yakın arkadaştık. Çocukluk arkadaşlarım. “Siz Alevisiniz, teröristsiniz, senin ağabeyin kesin dağa da çıkar gibi”, laflar edip, “senle biz bir daha görüşmek istemiyoruz” dediler. Beni aralarından attılar yani. Bir de geçen sene, çok çok yakın bir arkadaşım, kadın bir arkadaşım, okulda “siz Alevisiniz. Hristiyanısınız. Bizle bir alakanız yok. İslamlar bir alakanız yok. bunun gibi sürekli dalga geçilmesi, insanın tabi damarına dokunuyor. İşte öyle bir ayrışma yaşadık mesela. Artık onlar onu dedikçe, daha da kabarıyorsun, çünkü yeter artık diyorsun. Ben mesela şey dedim “ne gördün bizden? Ne yaptık ki size? Ne yaptık da böyle bir şey yapıyorsun bize?” Bütün herşey namazdan mı geçiyor? Namaz kılmadığımız için mi bunu bize yapıyorsunuz? Biz namaz kılmadığımız için hristiyan oluyoruz veya gavur oluyoruz veya ateist oluyoruz. Mesela halen Alevi olduğum için ateist olduğumu zannedenler var beni. Alevilik ateistliktir zannedenler var. Bunu çok çok görüyoruz, sürekli sokakta görüyoruz. Artık insanların Alevi’yim demeye bile utandığı zamanlar oluyor. Ben Aleviyim dediğimde, onu dedikten sonra, o güveni sağladıktan sonra, ben de Alevi’yim diyebiliyor karşıdaki.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Y : My parents told me not to say I am Alevi. It was said that they do not like us. I asked myself why did not they like us. I insisted to tell it. Then, I told and those things happened to me. That is, I had a great difficulty till the eighth-grade. I did not want to attend religion lesson. I was absent regularly from the school. Religion teacher hated me. As soon as he saw me, he pulled a long face. I could understand his anger from his eyes.

T : Could you always say “ am Alevi” ?

Y : I could not say it for quite a while. There was always the question of how would they react. After saying, I saw their reactions.

T : What did you see?

Y : I was alone. No one talked with me till the eighth-grade because I am Alevi. I was angry, so I did not use to say prayer.

T : Did your family tell the reason of those things?

Y : I have never received any clear answer. I asked them to see what they are going to do. Maybe they considered me as too little. They did not give an answer. But, I have learnt. I searched by myself. You are in Alevi sect and, due to this sect, there are people who do not acknowledge you.

<sup>45</sup> For instance, when I was too little at third or fourth grade, I experienced things. I was said such things that “you are Alevi, your foods are uneatable” etc. We were ten years old and were very close friends from the childhood. They said “you are Alevi, you are terrorists. Your older brother would possibly go to the mountain” and then said “we do not want anymore to meet you”, excluding me from themselves. Last year, one of my close friends, a woman, said in

He also tells his isolation from his friends. He has felt obliged to create an environment among Alevi friends now.

Benim şu an, dışarıdaki arkadaşlarımın hepsi Alevi mesela. Şu an bir tane bile benim Sünni arkadaşım yok. O derece hani, çünkü o kadar ayrışma olmuş. Beni en iyi anlayan onlar (Aleviler). Diğer arkadaşlar bir mezhepsel tartışma içerisine girdiğimizde hep ezme gereği duyuyorlar. Siz namaz kılmıyorsunuz gibisinden. Mesela ben küçükken hep şey yaşırdım. Cuma günleri bizim en son dersimiz din dersiydi. Din dersinden çıktığımızda, namaza götürürdü hoca bizi. Ben namaz kılmazdım. Mesela 2 saat namaz kılarılardı. ben kapının önünde otururdum. Hep böyle beklerdim arkadaşlarımı. Hep şey derlerdi bana, “hadi gelsene. Sen niye kılmıyorsun?” Ama benim nedense, hani yaşım daha küçük 7-8 yaşındayım, ama nedense benim kalbim hep “Hayır! Sen Alevi’sin” derdi. o zamandan beri benim kalbime işlemiş, sen Alevi’sin. Senin mezhebin değil yani. Bunu yaparsan, sen asimile olursun o zaman. Ben otururdum iki saat bankta. Onlar bitirince, çıkardık beraber giderdik.<sup>46</sup>

Emrah underscores his comfort as an Alevi person in Okmeydanı. Although he does not consider himself as ‘faithful’, after coming to Okmeydanı, he gave up to take his identity as a ‘guilt’. Before Okmeydanı, he lived in Balıkesir with his family. In discriminations of being Alevi, he was confounded by accusations and slanders just as those are because of his identity and family.

Bizim komşularımız vardı Balıkesir’de. Aşure dağıtırdık, ya aşureyi götürüyorsun, almıyorlardı. Biz alevilerin ev elinden yemek yemeyiz. Böyle şeyler oldu yani. İşte çok basit, mumsöndü, işte siz dinsizsiniz, siz sapıksınız gibisinden şeyler. Sorunu hep kendimde arıyordumdu açıkçası, sıkıntı bu. Buralara gelene kadar aslında, biraz da ergenlik bitene kadar, sorunu hep kendinde arıyor insan. İşte “Ben gerçekten böyle miyim? Bizim ailemiz gerçekten böyle mi? Biz nasıl böyle şeyler yaparız? İyi de benim annem böyle yapmaz ki” diyorsun. Bana

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the school that “You are Alevi. You are christian. You have nothing to do with and us and Islam”. This kind of things humiliate oneself. We experiences this kind of segregation. As long as they say so, you become more angry. You say enough. For instance I said her “What have we done to you. For what reasons do you do such a thing?” We can be seen as christian or infidel because we do not perform prayer. There are still people who suppose I am atheist because I am Alevi. We experience this kind of things regularly on the streets. Sometimes people feel ashamed of saying “I am Alevi”. When you say I am Alevi, then one could say also “he or she is Alevi” after creating safety.

<sup>46</sup> Now, all of my friends outside Okmeydanı are Alevi. I do not have a Sunni friend. For, segregations hapenned to such an extent. They (Alevi friends) are those who understand me most. Other friends always need to oppress me when we discuss secterian subjects, such as “you do not perform prayer”. For instance, I used to experience something when I was a child. On Fridays, since our last lesson was religion, after the lesson, the teacher used to take us to prayer. I did not ever perform prayer. They used to perform prayer for two hours, and I used to sit at the front of the door (of mosque). I just used to wait for my friends. They always said me “Why are not you performing prayer?”. Although I was just seven or eight years old, my heart always said “No. You are Alevi.” Since then, it has imprinted in my heart. This is not your sect. If you do that, you would become assimilated then. I used to sit on the bench. When they finished, we returned together.

böyle bir şeyler yapmadı. Bunları söylediği hiçbir şeyi yapmadık biz diyorsun. Nerden nerden, o şekilde aşırıyorsun yani olayları..<sup>47</sup>

Thus, Emrah feels more comfortable in Okmeydanı and thinks now that the ‘Otherness’ of Alevi people is not his fault. Rather than being alone with Alevi identity, the landscape of Okmeydanı has provided relatively safe grounds for Alevi community. Yet, this also brings about with an isolation of Alevi people into the space. Interactions with other spaces become more compelling for Alevi youth due to possible danger of discriminations. For Alevi community, Okmeydanı could be a public sphere. Yet, this public sphere become withdrawn from other spaces for both historical roots of discrimination and feelings of protections. They could become visible as Alevi in Okmeydanı, but public places outside Okmeydanı requires many young people to ‘be careful’ in expressing their identities.

In short, Alevi identity becomes one of inherited problems transferred into lives of youth from previous generations. Yet they do not know how to deal with this identity. They also do not receive any clear explanations from parents about why, at the beginning, they should be careful anyway. Alevi identity for youth is the source of unknown past which haunts everyday interactions in the present. It triggers both fear and anger in youth’s imaginations, and they oscillate between hiding and expressing Alevi identity. However, youth in this process have to face the grievances of being Alevi on their own and develop their own ways to articulate with the history of Alevism. This freedom also creates a new space in which youth could both explode conventional ways of Alevism and reframe the meaning of being Alevi in the context of their struggle. That is, Alevi identity is itself reconstructed by political youth in Okmeydanı from previous generations in the axis of violence and resistance, which I will discuss in Chapter 3.

### **Violence in Everday Life**

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<sup>47</sup> We had neighbours in Balıkesir. When you handed out aşure, they did not take them. They said “we do not eat food from hands of Alevis”. Things like that happened. These were like that mumsöndü, or the accusation that “you are nonbeliever” or “you are pervert”. [...] The prolem was that I was always searching the reason in myself. Until I came to here and the end of my adolescence, you look for the problem in yourself. Things like that, “Am I really that way? Is my family really so? How could we do such things? Yet my mom does not do things like that. She has not done to me something like that. You overcome those things after a while.

How do violence and the shadow of violence affect everyday life of urban youth in Okmeydanı? In which ways are precarious conditions violence produce embodied in youth subjectivities? Violence has become the part of everyday life in Okmeydanı. It has become the main issue that youth are compelled to endure, and through which they reframe their lives. Besides direct physical effects, violence is actualized in the sense of the collapse of taken-for-granted conditions for youth. In an unknowable environment of violence, Veena Das emphasizes “the mutual absorption of the violent and the ordinary” in the sense of “the event as always attached to the ordinary as if there were tentacles that reach out from the everyday and anchor the event to it in some specific ways ” (Das, 2007: 7). She argues that “boundaries between the ordinary and the eventful are drawn in terms of the failure of the grammar of the ordinary, by which [...] what is put into question is how we ever learned what kind of object something like grief, or love, is. This failure of grammar or what we may also call the end of criteria is [...] the experience of world-annihilation violence [...]” (ibid. 7-8). Under the shadow of violence produced by the police and political groups, youth are compelled to learn new reactions to deal with unknowabilities. Since the ordinary disappears, young individuals become deprived of stable guides in their lives. Violence replaces a predictable future with everyday negotiation with possibilities and failures. Social life in Okmeydanı is embedded with unmaking conditions of violence, and youth strive to remake new meanings in their lives.

Okmeydanı has witnessed the increasing police violence and armed clashes between political groups and police forces. In the 2000s, there occurred many violent struggles. In 2004, Okmeydanı came to the public agenda after many revolutionary groups clashed with police to protest the NATO meeting in Istanbul<sup>48</sup>. Violence was accelerated in next years, coinciding with the politicization of youth. One of the prominent political groups in Okmeydanı, DHKP-C, has been actively engaged with political activities, and become the main group which has mobilized urban youth. The movement, that was founded in 1978 and active from the 1990s, was losing its power due to state operations in the end of the 1990s. One of the important operations occurred in 2000 with the attack to the prison in which many members were imprisoned, namely *Hayata Dönüş* operation<sup>49</sup>. After the state operations, DHKP-C situated itself in leftist

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/37438-nato-zirvesi-protestosuna-mudahale>

<sup>49</sup> [https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/hayata\\_d%C3%B6n%C3%BCc5%9f\\_operasyonu](https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/hayata_d%C3%B6n%C3%BCc5%9f_operasyonu)

Alevi identified neighbourhoods, the most prominent being Okmeydanı. Besides, many revolutionary legal and illegal groups have become active in the district. Urban youth have faced contradictions of growing up within a violent world.

In this context, youth struggle to make sense of injurious attachments to the violent life. They experience the collapse of meanings of the ordinary life. Umut, 16 years old male, accounts his first direct experience with violence. For him, the random police attack to the workshop of his family was the first experience that makes him recognize vulnerable conditions in Okmeydanı. The random custody of his family members without any reason shows unpredictable consequences of police attacks.

Olay olduđu gün polisim sırf birini gözaltına almak için, bizim işyerini bastığı hatırlıyorum. Hatta şöyle olmuştu. Ben de işyerindeydim. Bizim işyeri Sibel Yalçın Parkı'nın üstündeydi. Olay olmuştu hatırlıyorum. Hatta dayıma, bak olay falan demiştim. Dayım beni eve bıraktı, başıma bir şey gelir diye. Dönüyor işte ,işyerinden içeri giriyor. Polis geliyor. Kapıda kapalı, soğuk. Polisler camları kırıyor vesair,e babam yukarı çıkıyor, babama saldırıyorlar. Bizim işyeri bodrum katında olduđu için hemen yanlarında da saksılar var merdivenin. Saksıları sağa sola atıyorlar, annemlerin üstüne atıyorlar. Annemin hatta gözünde çizik vardı bir ara. Bir erkek polisin sert bir şekilde anneme ve teyzeme tekmeler attığını biliyorum. İşte dayımla bizim ütücü abi vardı, dayımla ütücüyü alıyorlar ki, bunları da normal bir şekilde almıyorlar, saldırarak alıyorlar. Dayımın bacağında olsun bunun da olsun, yaralar oluyor..<sup>50</sup>

He remembers the desperate condition of his family. As a child, Umut felt the insecurity in his life. Even he witnessed many police attacks in the district, this was a turning point for him in that his family was heavily affected by the attack. The shock experience of the event made him question what the ordinary life is in Okmeydanı. Moreover, the precarious position of his family made him consider revolutionary people as new trustable and heroic figures. For, after the attack, many political groups came to the workplace to help him and his family.

Baktım böyle işyeri falan basıldıktan sonra, akrabalar insanlar toplanmış. İnsanları tanımıyorum ama, şimdi böyle düşününce işte

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<sup>50</sup> I remember that police attacked our workplace suddenly only for taking someone into custody. It happened that way. I was in the workplace too. Our workplace was located near Sibel Yalçın park. I remember that there occurred an event. I said to my uncle that there was an event. He took me to the house because he thought something could have happened to me. When he returned, the police entered the place. The doors were closed because the weather was cold. The police broke the glasses. My father went upstairs and they attacked him. Since our workplace was in the basement, there were flowerpots near the stairs. They threw them to my mother and aunts. My mother had even a scratch for a while. I know that a male police kicked my mother and aunt harshly. My uncle and an ironer person were taken not even in a normal manner, but through attacking them. My uncle had injuries in his leg and arm.

hepsi böyle solcu. Tanımadığımız tanıdığımız, tüm solcular bizim işyerimiz önünde toplanmıştı. Baktım böyle, annemle teyzem ölmüş haldeler, bitmişler. Öyle bir duruma gelmiş zaten. Polisler tarafından müdahale olmuş, babam vesaire üçü de, zaten gitmiş yani. Sadece benim annemin gözünde bir kutu(biber gazı) bitirmişler. [...]Yani sana şöyle diyeyim abi, bizim iş yeri basıldı, legal, illegal örgütler olsun, onlar bir tane polis yakalamışlar. Polisi aramış demişler arkadaşlarımızı bırakın yoksa polis elimizde. Bir saat içinde bırakacağız yemişler, bunlar da öyle bırakmışlar polisi.<sup>51</sup>

He defines leftist people as protectors to defend the life in Okmeydanı. For him, becoming a leftist is a moral terrain in which he can trust people. Violence consolidates the ethical and social ground of political groups not only due to political aims, but also narratives of justice for local people. It creates an emotional belonging to the space and symbolic kinships around new collectivities. Narratives of leftist and/or the revolutionary people are coded as active resistant figures confronting with violence bravely. The body of the revolutionary gains a semantic status for social life. His/her body compensates the loss of security through his/her performances. The body of the revolutionary is thus transferred to social space through which youth feel security and protection. Umut tells the importance of revolutionary people.

Yani nasıl söylesem, tanımasam bile, ne de olsa bir solcu kişiliği varsa gerçekten güvenilir insandır. Ben güvenirim şahsen. Tanımıyorum, yüzü kapalı, ama cidden bir solcu kişiliği varsa yani, insan güvenir. Yeter ki bir insan devrimci kişiliğine sahip olsun, ondan sonrası boş yani.<sup>52</sup>

Gökhan also tells the affective relationship with revolutionary people. Witnessing to violent struggles affects him in terms of defining insiders and outsiders of the district.

Aslında şöyle, ilk başta öğrendiğin şey temel şey şu oluyor: karşıdakinin kim olduğu, burada kişinin kim olduğu. Bu mahallenin kim olduğunu öğreniyorsun. İlk başta kaçayım diyorsun, eylem var eve gideyim derken, artık sonra bir durayım diyorsun bakayım diyorsun. Öyle gide gide, sen de onun içinde olmaya başlıyorsun. [...]

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<sup>51</sup> After the attack, I saw that our relative and people I did not know gathered around. When I think now, all leftist people we knew or did not know gathered around our workplace. My mother and aunt were like dead. They were in such condition. My father and others were taken by the police attack. They used one pepper gas bullet only on my mother's eyes. [...] Many legal and illegal groups came to the workplace and they caught a police officer. They called the police and said to release our friends because we had your friend. The police said that we would release them in one hour, and then they released the officer.

<sup>52</sup> I do not know how I can say, but even if I do not know those guys, if they have a leftist personality after all, they are trustworthy, I can trust in them. Although I do not know them and they are masked, if they are leftist, I can trust. As long as a human being has a revolutionary identity, nothing else matters.

Küçüksün, heyecanlısın, bir şeyler yapmak istiyorum. Böyle onları görüyorsun bir şaşırıyorsun. Hani şey derler ya, bir çocuğun küçükken kahramanı bir çizgi film kahramanıdır, bizimki hep onlar (devrimciler) oluyordu. Gördüğün devrimci abiler de bize öğreten insanlar oluyordu, yani bizim kahramanımız bunlar oluyordu. Biz onları çizgi film kahramanı gibi izledik. O da genel olarak, nasıl bir insanı çizgi film kahramanı kendine çeker, ben de onun gibi olmak isterim derse, sen de onun gibi olmak istiyorsun. Gördüğümüz devrimci abiler gibi.<sup>53</sup>

The term '*devrimci abiler*' which means revolutionary elder brothers is the main phrase youth use to define revolutionary persons who are older than them. It shows the powerful symbolic kinship relations in lives of youth. From the perspective of youth, brother-like figure of revolutionaries symbolizes the effective position in terms of guiding young people. In this sense, violence explodes the conventional family relations, and at the same time, it produces new collectivities around emotional attachments.

The one of important aspects of violence in Okmeydanı is its unpredictability. Its presence creates an uncanny condition which frames fears and concerns of youth. It penetrates into the routines of the everyday and transforms constantly the expectations from a fragile future. For Gökhan, police cars, *akreps*, and TOMAs are the images of violence and police repressure.

G: Fobi oluşturuyor insanda. Gaz atınca o çıkardıkları sesler, küçüklükten beri duyduğumuz, gaz atınca çıkan bir ses varya, pat diye vuruyor adama. Görüyorduk işte, insanları kovalamaları, dövmeleleri falan gözümüzün önünde. İnsanda fobi oluşturuyor artık. Akrep görünce kendini kötü hissediyorsun. Şuradan yanımızdan geçiyor, şey diyorsun kesin aldı beni diyorsun, o var yani aklımızda. E bir de yavaşlayınca tamam yani, bizim kalbimiz küt küt atıyor. Tamam diyorsun aldılar, suçsuz yere bile olsan hiçbir suçun olmasa da. O adam, o anda sana maske takmışsın dediyse tamam bittin yani hiç kurtuluşun yok. Çünkü şöyle birşey var, ne bileyim eylemcilerden bir tanesini alamazlarsa, bu mahalleden gelip bir tane genci alıyorlar rastgele. Birine suç atmak zorundalar, çünkü oraya boş dönemiyorlar veya amirlerine boş dönemiyorlar. Öyle bir şey var yani onu görüyorsun mahallede. Bugün sen bile yaşayabilirsin bunu. Mahallede yürüyorsundur, mesela iş için gelmişsindir, tez hazırlıyorsundur.. Çantan vardır. Bu kesin şudur derler. Seni içeri atarlar çantana

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<sup>53</sup> The first thing you learnt is who is against you and who is here with you. You learn who are neighborhood residents. [...] Think you are a excited child and you want to do something. You are seeing and suprised of them. Just in case the hero of a child is a cartoon hero, ours have always become them. Revolutionary elder brothers (*Devrimci abiler*) who teach us everything have become our heroes. We used to watch them like carton heroes. Just as a cartoon hero attracts you and you want to become like it, you want to become like them, revolutionary brothers we saw.



bakarlar, gerçekten kağıtlar vardır. Çantayı kapatırlar. Şöyle bir dövelim, stres atalım gibi düşünürler. Döverler seni amirlerine götürürler, sonra seni serbest bırakırlar.

T: Senin başına böyle bir şey gelmiş miydi peki?

G: Almışlardı, küçükken. Dövdüler bıraktılar.

T: Ne hissettin peki?

G: Baya büyük bir adam gibi dövdüler beni. Sanki büyük biriyim gibi dövdüler. Hiçbir suçum yoktu, yukarda olay oluyordu. Ben yukarda olay olduğunu bile bilmiyordum, oturuyordum. Maç oynamıştık o zaman aşağıda. Biraz dinleneyim dedim, abur cubur almıştım. Oturuyordum. Yan tarafta bir baktım, geldiler aldılar beni. Hiçbir şey daha sormadan baya dövdüler. Yüzümü kan içinde bıraktılar. Beni dövdükten sonra sanki, iyi birilermiş gibi, davranıyorlar bir de. Dövdükten sonra böyle diyor bir de, dinleyecek halim kalmıyor zaten, “sakın oğlum yapmayın böyle şeyler, niye polise taş atıyorsunuz lan, iyi insanlarınız oğlum biz yapmayın böyle şeyler”. Ve o gün ben şey dedim kendi kendime şuradan bir çıkayım var ya, gösterecem hepimize. O şeye girdim yani. O zaman mesela kin tuttum onlara karşı, o dayağı yiyince.<sup>54</sup>

Random attacks become the very part of life in Okmeydanı. They result in many injuries, and sometimes, deaths. A young child, Berkin Elvan, was killed by gas bullet fired by the police. Umut, who is a friend of Berkin, is too much affected by the death of his friend. Violence is transferred to another level with deaths. Youth embody predicaments of violence and have to deal with them. Life is decomposed at this moment, and youth are compelled to reconstruct their ways to belong to life. He remembers the exciting environment in the Gezi protest and how the killing of one of his peers devastated his feelings.

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<sup>54</sup> G: They cause a phobia inside you. You remember the sounds when they throw gas bullets. They hit to the guys with a pop. Chasing and beating people occurs in front my eyes, creating a phobia. When you see an akrep, you feel very bad. It drives by you, and then you say that they will take me this time. And also, if it slows down, your heart pounds. You says, that is it, even if you are not guilty, you are taken. If the guy says that you are masked, you are dead, you have no escape. Because there is such a thing that if they do not caught one involved, they take a young person from the neighbourhood randomly. They need one to blame. They cannot return to their chief without nothing. Even you might experience such a thing in the neighbourhood. For instance, you might perhaps come to the district for a job or your thesis. Maybe you have a bag. They say that he is the guy, take you, look at your bag. Even if it has only papers, they think that let's beat him to relax, they beat you, and take you to their chief, then release you.

T: Have you ever experienced something like that?

G: They took me when I was a child. They beat and release me.

T: What did you feel?

G: They beat me as if I was an adult. I did not have any guilt. The incident was happening up there. I did not know even what was happening. After the football play, I was sitting to take a rest. I bought junk food. When I looked sideways, they came, took me and beat me without asking any question. My face was drenched in blood. After beating, they behaved me as if they were good men. I was already too exhausted to listen, they said me not to do such things, why were you throwing stones to police, we were good guys. That day, I said myself you will pay for it when I get out of here. I was in such condition. I held grudge against them after beating.

Vurulmadan 1-2 saat önce ben eve gitmişim. Zaten o zaman gezi sürecinde halk sabaha kadar ayaktaydı. Çok güzel bir durumdu yani. Yürüyüşler, bir de karnı acıkanlar falan geliyordu, yataklar aşağıdaydı. Birileri poğaça getiriyor vesaire. Öyle bir durumdu. Şimdi eve gidiyorum, uykum gelmiş, hani benim uykum geldi, sadece ben eve gidiyordum. İşte sabah kalkıyorum, annem böyle böyle diyor işte birisi vurulmuş, biz de tam bilmiyoruz Berkin'in olduğunu. Ondan sonra direk öldü haberi geliyor, öldüğü sanılıyor, dedikodu çıkıyor. Şu anda, anlatırken bile, tüylerim diken diken oluyor, farklı oluyor. İnsan Seviniyor insan, kurtulacak gibi birşey oluyor. Sonra yavaş yavaş alışıyor şey olmaya. Abi bekliyorsun, yaklaşık 240-250 gün falan geçiyor. Bir gün iyi olduğu gözüküyor, bir gün kötü olduğu gözüküyor. İyiyken böyle sevinçleniyorsun, ama kötü iken de yavaş yavaş alışıyorsun. Mesela ben öldüğü günde eve gelmek istedim. İlk arkadaşlarım söyledi bana, sabaha karşı yitirilmiş. Okuldaydım ben hiçbir şeyden haberim yok, bir arkadaşım söyledi. Ben böyle tuvalete gittim. Sonra arkadaşım geldi, mal mal aynaya bakıyorum. Ne olduğunu insan şey yapamıyor. Cidden hani çok yakın oluyorsun0 çok yakın olmuyorsun vesaire ama, insan yine de ölüm olunca bir aptallaşılıyor yani. Zira benim kuzenimlerim de olsun hemen hemen aynıydı, aptallaşıyorlardı. Yani hiçbir şey olmuyor, ne ağlıyorsun ne gülüyorsun. Böyle boş boş bakıyorsun. Herşey böyle güzeldi, yapıyorsun falan. Karşına bir anda böyle bir şey çıkıyor. Afalliyorsun, ne oluyor diyorsun. Hani olmaması gerekiyordu, hani herşeyin güzel olması gerekiyordu gibi birşey oluyor.<sup>55</sup>

Violence and deaths emerges as critical events belonging to everyone. Young people, like Umut, requestion their faith that “everything will be supposed to be okay”. Umut’s account shows that precarious conditions of violence explode meanings of his routine life. Youth describes their everyday life around the repertoire of fear, anger and mourning. Violence is pervasive in their narratives. They are dealing with violence as both external and internal thing. The definition of life is itself redefined every time. There is no stable condition to give meanings to their life. The process is always a negotiated and ambivalent field with new failures and possibilities. In this sense, Thiranagama argues the effects of violence and war on individual biographies as both

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<sup>55</sup> One-two hours before he was shot, I went home. In that period, in the Gezi protest, people were awake all night long. It was a very nice condition indeed. When walking people got hungry, they came to the street, slept on the street. Some people were bringing pastries. It is such a condition. Since I needed to sleep, I went home. When I woke up in the morning, my mother said that someone was shot; we did not know that he was Berkin. After that, it was said he died, but it was a rumor. Now, while telling, I am getting goose bumps. One was being happy that he would recover. You are getting used to that condition afterwards. You were waiting, it lasted 240-250 days. Some day, he seems to be alright, but another day, he seemed to be bad. When he was ok, you became happy, but when he was bad, you were getting used to. When he died, I wanted to come home. My friends told me that he passed away. I was at school. I did not know about anything, one of my friends told me. I went to toilet, my friend came to me, I was looking at the mirror stupefiedly. You cannot understand what was going on. Really, whether you are close to him or not, when death comes, you become stupefied. My cousins became likewise stupefied. Nothing happens, I mean. You neither cry nor smile. You are looking at nothing. You say yourself everything is ok. You encountered such thing. You become bewildered, you say what is going on. I thought that it should not have happened, I thought everything would be supposed to be okay.

external and internal thing in the context of Sri-Lankan civil war. She states that “the war had assume a radical exteriority, a self-compelling fore seemingly out of control over everyone, which then became an existential condition, a ‘thing’ itself. Yet this thing [...], events that happend to one, was also [...] something that happened inside one” (Thiranagama, 2011, 10). Thus, in the construction of the self, violence becomes an internal condition, “happens inside one”. Subjects are compelled to develop new ways of life and manners of endurece in the vulnerable conditions to which they are exposed relentlessly. As in Umut’s account, youth in Okmeydanı attempt to make their interpellation into the violent social world intelligible and endurable. This attempt requires the constant formation of subjectivities. New categories of attachment to life because the existing categories undergone devastating changes. Violence, therefore, become a frame on which the inital existence of subjects depends. It is also a frame in which subjects form their selves and imagine a life outside of it. Violence is thus an “injurious and yet productive and constitutive” power for the lives of youth (ibid. 12).

Youth in Okmeydanı does not occupy a safe place, and do not have the anchor of the family. Nor do they inherit trustable categories from previous generations. Rather, they should develop new understandings of social relations with a new generational consciousness (Mannheim, 1952). And, within this context, ruptures, failures, possibilities of violence is the prominent force that transform the existing social conditions. That is why young people in Okmeydanı seperate themselves from their families and conventional ways, and that is why that youth occupies compelling and yet autonomous space.

Yeşim is actively engaged with political activities and has plans to enter the university. When I asked her how she oscillates between the political struggle and the plan for the univernity, she clearly says that these contradict with each other.

Bir yerine oturmuyor benim gelecek planlarımda. Burada benim başıma birşey gelirse, gelecek planı diye birşey kalmaz zaten. Bu çok hassas bir nokta. Belki ben kaçmak zorunda kalacağım hapis cezası şuydu buydu. Benim arkadaşım mesela cenazeye gitmiş almışlar canlı bomba şeyinden. Bir sürü şey çıkarmışlar başına. Alıyorlar tamam mı bir sürü şey çıkartıyorlar başına, hapse atmaya çalışıyorlar. Öyle bir

şey olursa zaten ayvayı yedin sen. Senin ne geleceğin kaldı ne bir şeyin kaldı. Ya sen kaçacaksın ya da dağa çıkacaksın.<sup>56</sup>

In short, violence preoccupies the every part of life. It destabilizes conditions of life. From this, youth always rethink their possibilities for the present and future. The formation of subjectivity under the shadow of violence is thus a endless process exposed to ruptures in social life. The routinization of violence is taken for granted for people in Okmeydanı. It penetrates into mundane experiences and constitutes the chronic state of fear and the world of uncertainty. As Linda Green says, this is the powerful dimension of chronic violence. She argues that “the routinization of terror is what fuels its power. Such routinization allows people to live in a chronic state of fear behind a facade of normalcy, even while that terror permeates and shred the social fabric” (Green, 1999: 60). This routinization inserts violence into the imagination of youth. Young people incorporate the symbols and codes of violence into their routine activities, conversations and plays. The dangers of violence and police are embedded in routine conversations.

Zeynep, a 23 years old female, also remembers police attacks. For her, police embodies the suspension of life in Okmeydanı. She tells her anger and frustration of police.

Z : Ya şöyle oluyor zaten. Çatışma çıktığı an, mahalleye giriyorlar, o an zaten bizim için hayat bitiyor. Sürekli gaz sıkıyorlar. Zaten biz parkın orada oturuyoruz, sürekli parka sıkıyorlar. Onlar girdiği an bizim hayatımız bitiyor. Bir keresinde işte o zaman öğle vaktiydi. Okula gitmemiştim evdeydim. Yine böyle birinin anması mı ne vardı. Geldi mesela akrepten indi ana avrat küfür etti. Herkes balkondaydı. İşte kökünüzü kurutacağız gibisinden falan laf etti. O zaman benim çok onuruma dokunmuştu.

T : Bu tacizler falan filan sende bir öfke doğuruyor mu peki?

Z : Yani tabi ki. Sevmiyorum ben zaten. Doğuşumdan itibaren sevmiyorum bilmiyorum. Belki hani böyle aşılandım, bilmiyorum ama. Bir nefret var tabii ki.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> It does not fit to anywhere in my future plans. If something happens to me here, there will no be things like future plans. That is a very sensitive point. Perhaps, I will have to escape because of the possible prison sentence. For instance, my friend went to a funeral, he was arrested for the charge of being suicide bomber. They charge him with many things. When you are taken, you are accused for things, they try to imprison you. If something like that happens, you are in trouble. You have no future or anything else. You will either escape or go up to the mountains (join to political groups).

<sup>57</sup>Z : It happen in the way that when a clash occurs, they enter the neighbourhood. At that time, life for us is suspended. They always use tear gas. Since we live near the park, they throw gas bullets at the park. When they come, life is over for us. Once, at noon, I was at home and I did not go to the school. There was a commeration of

Growing up in Okmeydanı brings about with fear and anger against the police. Experiences of police violence and raids become demonic figures for urban youth. Zeynep has also a traumatic experience with the police. Her brother was arrested for political reason. For Zeynep, it was a devastating point. She remembers the police raid to home at 5 am. The images of police officers do not cease to haunt her life.

Saat 5 falandı benim amcam aradı evi. İşte o söyledi geleceklerini söyledi. Bizim adresimiz orası gözüktüğü için oraya gitmişler ilk. Ondan sonra geldiler. Abim çıktı tabii ki evden. Baya çok gelmişlerdi, 20 30 kişi falan vardı. Ellerinde uzun silahlar vardı. İşte sordular. Biz yok dedik 2 aydır gelmiyor eve dedik. [...] İlk defa gördüm bir şeydi. Çok korkmuştum. Bir de hepsi uzun boylu iri yarı falan. Bir dönem sürekli psikolojik tedavi görmüştüm. Dava sürecinde sürekli gözümün önüne geldi mesela. Bıyıkları falan geliyordu uzun botları, gözümün önüne geliyordu okulda falan.<sup>58</sup>

In conclusion, violence produces frames in which meanings of life is constantly decomposed and reproduced. The unintentional dependency on such frames lead to searching of new stable categories for urban youth. The devastating effects of violence make urban youth more vulnerable to social conditions. Yet, it also compels them to form new subjectivities to deal with them. Those frames constitutes new possibilities to create life projects for youth. Some of them, however, appropriate, or some negotiate or abandon the possibilities to create a new life outside such frames. In either case, violence grounds the initial points of life to form different subjectivities. In the appropriation or abandonment of such, it has become such a forceful point that individual biographies go through effects of it.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed historical position of youth in Turkey, and delienated experiences and self-narratives of *Okmeydanlı* youth. Youth in Okmeydanı

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someone. They came to the neighbourhood again. One of them got off akrep, swore at us. Everone was at balcoon, and he said that we will destroy all of you. It hurt my pride too much.

T: Did it arise hatred inside you?

Z: Of course. I do not like them anyway. I do not like them from the birth. I do not know, maybe I was imposed on that. There is an anger of course.

<sup>58</sup> It was at 5 am that my uncle called us to inform that they were coming. Since our address was there in legal records, they went to my uncle first. My brother escaped from the house. A crowded group came, there were about 20-30 people. They had long guns in their hands. They asked us for him. We said he had not been here for two months. [...] That was the first thing that I had ever experienced. I was very afraid. They all were tall and bulky. I received a physiological treatment for a while. In the lawsuit process, the images of them were conjured up. I conjured up of the pictures of their mustaches and long boots at school.

were born into a social world in which many problems come from previous generations. These are not their choices, but they have to deal with. Most of grievances of youth derive from familial relations, migration, poverty, structural problems and ethnic and racial discriminations. This chapter mainly revolved around inherited failures and vulnerabilities of youth. Now, they are in search of some explanations and solutions for them without the absence of help of family. Moreover, violence in everyday life worsens the conditions of living and make youth more precarious. In this setting, there emerges many possibilities, both political and individual. In each case, youth gain more autonomy to develop their subjectivities. It urges us to think emerging subjectivities of youth in this challenging, and yet generative environment.



### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **"SACRIFICE IS JUSTICE" : ON POLITICAL SUBJECTIVITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF POWER, VIOLENCE AND RESISTANCE**

In this chapter, I will focus on political subjectivities of youth in Okmeydanı which have come to the public agenda in the last decades. Okmeydanı has become the one of the prominent districts in Istanbul where the political mobilization of youth flourishes. Given the outlines of problems and vulnerabilities of youth I have attempted to describe, youth in Okmeydanı are increasingly engaged in political struggle.. The political life is imbued with individual biographies, hopes and failures in Okmeydanı.

In the context of chronic problems in lives of youth, the landscape of Okmeydanı offers youth different ways of choices in the realms of the political. Thus the political constitutes the important part of the imaginary of most of urban youth. Then, if the life and the political are so closely intertwined, what does youth envisage in their futures through political engagements? How do the past, the present and the future encounter with each other at this specific time and space? If the urban youth is excluded from the domains of the society with increasing state violence and discriminating policies, in which ways does youth develop a political subjectivity to bear uncertainties of life?

The life organized around political subjectivities in Okmeydanı is intervened by state violence, brutality and the lack of reliable conditions of feeling secure. And, in the domains of political life, it is so much so that arrestments, clashes with police forces, tortures etc. constitutes the political imaginaries of youth. Within these conditions, the regular conditions and meanings of life are suspended. Moreover the distinctions between life and death, exception and ordinary are no more valid in this environment. In some contexts, the excessiveness of the political within normal domains of power and sovereign is marked as ‘abnormal’ and ‘out of order’ (Agamben, 1999). As Agamben puts it, state of exception is only the another domain of the functioning of sovereignty, and perhaps in the most supreme form of power. The suspense of law is not the renunciation of power in the context of state of exception, but the act of sovereignty which constitutes what is excluded and included from the general rules of law. That is what Agamben calls "the paradox of sovereignty" which consists in the fact the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order" (Agamben, :15).

Thus the state of exception is the condition in which power reproduces itself, and more importantly, constructs ‘normal’ structures of political-judicial order through identifying what is beyond the normals. Conditions and lives are, therefore, requisites

for the functioning of power in the realm of political existence. Moreover, in the context of the 'excessiveness' of the political, the state of exception is the most effective way to subsume what is beyond the general domains of power. Here power creates and maintains norms and limits of life, and simultaneously, exposes itself to zones of exception. Sovereignty commences its power on subjects in the state of exception through excluding them. Agamben defines the point as "inclusive exclusion":

The exception is a kind of exclusion. [...] [T]he most proper characteristic of the exception is that what is excluded in it is not, on account of being excluded, absolutely without relation to the rule. On the contrary, what is excluded in the exception maintains itself in relation to the rule in the form of the rule's suspension. *The rule applies to the exception in no longer applying, in withdrawing from it.* The state of exception is thus not the chaos that precedes order but rather the situation that results from its suspension. (Agamben, 1998: 17-18, original emphasis)

In Okmeydanı, the constant presence of police marks the space as an excluded area in which the general functioning of the state does not occur. From the outside, the space is demarcated as an outer/excluded district, but at the same time, from within the space, it is confined with the presence of state power embodied in the body of police forces. Just as the paradox of sovereignty is that it is both outside and inside the law it constitutes, the paradox of oppressed in the spaces of Okmeydanı is that it is the external to the general rules, but not independent from state power. Sovereign exists with the altered techniques of subjectivation, and it does not lose its power. Rather it enacts its sovereign power more manifestly on lives of subjects in this condition. What is changed is the approach of the state power toward body of subjects and how it defines features of being a human in the light of normative conditions it regulates. In political spaces of Okmeydanı, as Agamben points out, "[w]hat cannot be included in any way is included in the form of the exception" (1998: 24).

Here we reach to another important point Agamben points: the condition and definition of the subject in the state of exception. In the state of exception, power defines distinctions between what "bare life" is, that is the life of *homo sacer*, and what "good life" is. The life of *homo sacer* is banned from political existence, and again through this exclusion, this life is under the political domain of sovereign power. The ultimate aim of power over the life *homo sacer* is to nullify its political existence, or to transform this life into 'proper' life through interiorizing its existence. What is



dangerous for sovereign power is the success of *homo sacer* in gaining a political existence without leaving very conditions of being *homo sacer*. More clearly, the struggle of oppressed people for political existence is inimical to definitions and limits power regulates.

As Agamben puts it, the life of *homo sacer* is considered and defined as "killable and yet not sacrificed" by sovereign power. The aim is not only to kill human beings, but most importantly, to deprive beings from their subjectness. The realm of bare life is thus on the margin of political domain of power. However, I argue, what is absent in Agamben's analysis is what happens on the side of oppressed. I think that to frame the landscape as *only* the condition state of exception seems to me that it ignores political subjectivities. To make analogies in the argument of state of exception deprives the analysis of historical roots. It runs the risk of decontextualizing and despatializing (Comaroff, 2007). It could maybe give some insights into the functioning of state power, but in Okmeydanı, the situation is more complicated. First, the law is not suspended ultimately, as in the context of concentration camps. Rather, state power restores itself over political subjects in Okmeydanı, oscillating between the law and beyond the law. Secondly, spatial boundaries of Okmeydanı are not always besieged. Of course, there is always police surveillance and the possibility of police attacks and violent clashes. Yet, the 'exceptionality' of the space is also reproduced by political groups in Okmeydanı. They portray the state and the police as their targets to achieve political aims. In this imaginery relations, both figures reframe the landscape of Okmeydanı as a violent and exceptional space. In this sense, rather than conceptualizing the space as an ultimate domain of state power, I will discuss the relationship between the struggle of political subjects and the restoring of state power in violent encounters in a "mimetic" relation (Arextaga, 2005).

To be sure, life is at very beginning by violence. The state manifests itself in the form of violence, rather than everyday forms of discourses and "disciplinary" practices (Foucault, 1984). Violence becomes the discourse of the state power which call for a counter-violence in the political realm. When violence become both the manifestation of state power and the language of resistance in Okmeydanı, the struggle and "subjectivation" (Butler, 1997) of political subjects are articulate with symbolic domain of state power. Sovereign power defines, or *attempts* to define, limits of life, it does not immediately destroy the subjectness of beings, nor do subjectivities of people in

excluded zones of sovereign evaporate. What happens in this act is the constant struggle of the oppressed for the power to transform itself from the object to the subject of political power. In this very condition, the struggle in the political realm is "constantly trying to transform its own bare life into a way of life", as Agamben puts it (1998: 9).

Political groups situate themselves at political struggle against the state. As I mentioned before, the political realm in Okmeydanı is very heterogeneous, even though DHKP-C seems the most prominent political group in public discourse. Yet, there is no an overarching political group which combines youth in a specific political project. Unlike the powerful presence of PKK in the Southeastern region, which provides a powerful imagination of Kurdistan, political groups frame their struggle on more ambiguous terms. Youth engage with political struggle without a concrete political project. Yet, rather than a political project, the 'struggle' is an appropriate term to understand political subjectivities of youth. Their engagement with the axis of violence/resistance in the struggle will be my main theme throughout the chapter. State power has no longer a monopoly on violence, but rather, the politicized youth becomes also the main actor of violent activities.

In this sense, what ways does the political life in Okmeydanı provide youth to create new ways of life? How do they develop resistance against state violence? Are the ways around which political subjectivities of youth are interiorized and/or framed by sovereign power? The main question of this chapter is how and to what extent youth attempts to gain dominance over their lives and bodies through political mobilization. And through their performativities in political agency, in what ways do they challenge the political domains of state power over body and life? Do they fail to do so? Is there a threshold between the political struggle and the ordinary life? If so, how is it trespassed and what conditions does trigger this trespassing?

### **Revolutionaries, Heroes, Martyrs: Collective Memory, Testimony and *Bedel***

Youth in Okmeydanı have been imbued with narratives and images with glorified politicization. From childhood, growing up in the district is coincided with the prominent possibility of politicization. Many young people assume the political struggle as a way of dealing with compelling problems in their lives. Engaging with the political

life is an attractive medium to compensate for the grievances based on the feelings of injustice, inequalities and discriminations. In the lack of the confidence in education and promises of the family, the political realm embodies the solution to predicament young people get stuck on. Precarious educational future deprives many of them of organizing their lives around codes of 'normal' life conditions.

In the neighbourhood, revolutionaries become heroic actors which many young people admire while growing up. Narratives of arrestments, tortures, political struggle pervade around the landscape of Okmeydanı. Heroic actions of revolutionaries in their political lives seem to youth a desirable way they demonstrate their anger, frustration and failures. In this sense, the political atmosphere has become a powerful medium in which conventional ways presented to youth could not compete with the engagement with political agency. Possibilities of future, thus, are organized around those political opportunities. While the shadow of vulnerability in lives of young people nullify everyday attempts to create the anchor of a prospect life, new ways emerge out of political promises. These promises, therefore, does not divide up into different domains, but rather, they flourishes at the very core of collective/subjective joint. After a point, the already-ambiguous division between the life and the political becomes totally evaporated, and two domains intermingles with each other inextricably. This is, of course, not inherent feature in political actions of specific groups, nor independent from long-term state policies. This is the very repercussion of state policy over space and individual lives. That is, the more the political power of the state penetrates into and encompass the life itself, the more the lives of young people become associated with the political itself.

It is not surprising that many of young people I interviewed narrated their life stories without clear cut lines between the life and the political. After his failures in his educational life, Halil works at different jobs temporarily. Yet those jobs were not satisfactory. With the escalation of state pressure after the NATO demonstration in 2004 in Okmeydanı, he quitted his last job to attend the protest and, after that, being a revolutionary has occupied his all life. His process is full with the frustration with prospect life in the future.

Yani bitti işte. Hiçbir şey yapamadık okul olmadı, müzik olmadı. İttim kendimi bu tarafa, hiçbir şey yapamazsan ben de devrimci olurum dedim. Ortaya bu çıktı yani devrimcilik. Az da olsa, yanlış da olsa

eksik de olsa, devrimcilik yapmaya karar verdim yani. Böyle geçti o dönem.<sup>59</sup>

He narrates his engagement with the political life in a frustrated manner. This point is interesting because, even the political life seems to him a way of transcending the problems he experienced, this domain again entraps him into this space. The way he forms his political subjectivity is produced and framed by collective life in the space.

The more he engages with the political life, the more he is attached to the space. In this sense, the struggle through political life aims at a transgression, but it is a space-bounded action. The space encapsulates political subjectivities into its boundaries and language of political action which emerges within the boundaries. Here a very interesting point emerges. The exclusion with state violence and policies creates an inner language of the space which becomes a symbolic domain through which many young people communicate with each other. The exclusion maintains itself not only through physical forces, but most importantly, through symbol and psychological boundaries. It maintains itself also through creating self-enclosed language which reproduces the boundaries. After a point, the question of which sphere (inner or outer spheres of the neighbourhood) is excluded depends on whether it is considered from the inner or outer space. This exclusion brings with new meanings of the space. In the last instance, the state power marks the boundaries, but the symbols, language and even those boundaries are reframed and reproduced by local people. The space gains mythical features which develops around the codes of violence and resistance.

Indeed, there are not any checkpoints in the conventional sense of the term. Of course, there is always a police presence against possible demonstrations. However, many political groups also reproduce boundaries. In other words, political actions and performativities materialize boundaries and make the invisible visible; the discursive become the spatial. From the entry to the spaces of the district in which violent clashes occur, the space is not marked as much by physical police force, but rather by the effective presence of political graffiti, performance on specific spaces, and narratives of spaces through collective memory. The materialization of symbolic space and boundaries is inherent in the bodily practices and material construction of space. The mythical construction of space is not produced by a single act, nor the everyday

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<sup>59</sup>Here it was over. I couldn't do anything. The school thing or the music life had not been done. I pushed myself into this way. I said if I could not do anything I would become a revolutionary. This shows up. Even if false or imperfect, I decided to do this. This period passed that away.

presence of police forces. The process is constructed not only in the imaginary of youth, but also in the material space and social actions.

In this sense, Yael Navaro-Yashin explains this kind of affective and imagined spaces in the sense of "make-believe " spaces. She argues that phantasmatic features attributed to the space does not only stay within the imaginary, but materialize through practices. "The make-believe as a social form" refers "not only to space and territory but also to modes of governance and administration and to material practices (Navaro-Yashin, 2012: 5) ". Thus the phantasmatic and the material are not two separate domains but become entangled in everyday practices. She points out that "the fantasy actor in the phantasmatic" is "not as a figment of the imagination, a construct, or a discourse, but as a concrete manifestation of social practices, as a tangibility, and as a real (ibid. 15)". In the spaces of Okmeydanı, the imaginative and, sometimes mythical, features of the political realm get materialized through self-representations through social practices. In this sense, the space, political imaginary and performativities of youth are inextricably linked together. Space thus become the juncture of political imaginary and concrete events of state violence. It does not itself produce an affects on political subjects, but subjects invests meanings of political subjectivities into the space.

There is no a stable process through which young people fix their identities. Identities and subjectivities of youth are in flux and open to transformation and affects of political space. What distinguish youth in Okmeydanı from other young people in different spaces is that new ways could be found in collective experiences of the political realm. Subjectivity is thus not developed only in inner lives of youth, nor divorced from from macrolevel social and political changes. Collective life in Okmeydanı provides powerful space in which the interconnections between cultural representations, collective memory and subjectivity occur. This chapter claims that the settings of political violence and state forces does not attribute passive features to subjects, but rather, language and sociability are reframed around the political life. What this language offers is exchanges between political representations and individual processes. In the settings of vulnerability of life, youth is given the temporal adjustments to make sense of their lives around political subjectivities. That is why many young people do not experience the political life as an extra activity, but, at one point the political life supersedes the domain of the life itself.

. This life is imbued with new social and moral codes and provides a social force for the possibility of new social alignments. The space of the political realm is not only based on concrete political events, but it is also a phantasmatic space which haunts the imaginery of youth. The haunting affect of the political life is powerfully derived from indefinite division between life and death. The specter of state violence pervades around the spaces of Okmeydanı. As Agamben puts it, what is the underlying condition of the life of *homo sacer* is this worthlessness of life and the arbitrary decision of killing through desecrating even the death. Yet what is absent in Agamben's formulation is the question of how subjects, "killable and yet not sacrificed" in the eye of state power, make sense of deaths and tortures in their lives. Desecrated acts of state violence does not necessarily mean that subjects do not acknowledge these acts quiescently. Just as political existence of subjects, which seems a violating and threatening act to state power, is struggled to achieve by political subjects, subjects also strive to make deaths valuable and sacred in social acts of the political life. The political life in Okmeydanı is not only a struggle for achieving political existence, but also an ongoing act to hold the meanings over life and death.

The body of revolutionaries, therefore, becomes the medium of political exchanges. The representation of death body is recoded by renarrating and recoding by political subjects and it becomes a political commodity. The body of revolutionaries altered by the violence is the domain of state intervention, but at the same time, the domain of reproduction of moral and political codes. Political performance of collective action is transferred via ritualistic acts into the individual body. Targeted by the state violence, the body is a contested medium which both state power and the political claims of young people struggle to reproduce their political existences. The inversion of desecrated meanings of death bodies attributed by state power into sacred codes is achieved by commemoration and collective memory in the cult of martyrdom. Martyrdom becomes an affective social force which does not only stay within the narratives, but also give new agencies to political subjects. As Das claims in another context, "the very act of violence invests the body with the agency — not only the body of the perpetrator of the violence but also that of the victim and the survivor" (Das, 1996: 173, cited in Spencer(2000)). Acts of state violence embodied in the body of revolutionaries creates new possibilities for youth subjectivities to flourish. Deaths and narratives of collective violence become an anchor point for young people to form their

subjectivities. Through these narratives and commemorative acts, as Jonathan Spencer points out, deaths and bodies of the martyrs " can be seen as pursuing the politics of certainty, in which death is the mysterious but unambiguous point of reference upon which to build a moral word and a sense of community" (Spencer, 2000: 134).

Among youth in Okmeydanı, sacrificial acts are seen to the ultimate struggle against the state violence. The more the state manifests itself in the bodies of political youth, the more the body becomes the point of the resistance. Youth in Okmeydanı experiences the ritual acts of death bodies of revolutionaries. This kind of remembrance also activates personal memories and is embedded with the political-social context. The bodies of death revolutionaries signifies the embodiment of both interventions of state power and the transgressive act against the state. Through the body, signs of both state violence and resistance are transferred into the political imagery of the witnesses. Many young people experience effects of the state through death body of revolutionary. The political mediation of dead bodies is experienced by youth through what Allen Feldman calls "sacrificial transfers" (1991). Following Girard (1977), Feldman considers "the victim as a surrogate, an emissary who facilitates the transfer of pollution out of an afflicted community. He elaborates:

"Sacrifice is a commensuration of the many to the one; it shifts collective disorder to a personified transgressor. The body of the sacrificial victim is the detached part that encapsulates a disordered or disordering whole, and its deformation expresses the passage out of disorder. *The substitution of the whole by the detached part is the basic principle of sacrificial process.* Violent surrogation as the separation of parts from whole is a medium for transforming the whole. [...] Within the victim's community, the stiff is marked by violence as an artifact and effect of an alien space. The stiff is both the personalized victim with all the residual associations, linkages, and affectivity of kinship and residence and the simulacrum of the Other who has committed the violence. Stiffing is a graphic art, and the stiff is a political text whose original script of ethnic-spatial symmetry has been effaced by wounding and death. The corpse, its blood, its wounds are quasi-organic signs of a tactile and political contiguity with the Other. " (Feldman, 1991: 78, original emphasis)

In Okmeydanı, there have been many experiences of deaths of political subjects. More importantly, many young people experienced the resistance of revolutionaries through their bodies in the death fast actions since 1996. To resist against the imprisonment in F-type prisons which have been considered as isolation units by many political groups to deprive them of their basic social and psychological needs, political

prisoners started the death fast action first in 1996. The most important death fast action, however, started in October, 2000, due to the final decision of the transfer into F-type prisons. This resistance ended up the most brutal state intervention in the prisons in which many political groups are imprisoned. The intervention, which is called as the operation "Return to Life" (*Hayata Dönüş Operasyonu*) was ironically concluded with the deaths of 32 political prisoners through the direct attack of the army force. There also occurred many deaths due to the ongoing death fast action in both prisons and some neighbourhoods after the operation. Many of prisoners also suffered from serious medical damages, prominent of which is Wernicke–Korsakoff syndrome that is a serious brain damage with permanent memory loss. In those death fast actions, the political group DHKP-C became the prominent figure whose many members engaged with the death fast actions. Among the neighbourhoods which many political subjects maintain the death fast action until 2005, Okmeydanı has become the one of the prominent district in which the resistance continued. These actions shaped the local codes of resistance, sacrifice and death of political subjects. The actual witnessing to the sacrificial acts of political figures has influenced the relationship between the political and the life. This kind of witnessing of resistance to death created heroic figures in the mythicized space. The action has been called by local people as "sacrificial actions" (*feda eylemleri*). Those actions have shaped codes of resistance, and become political narratives for many political youth.

Cemal remembers the death fast actions in Okmeydanı, and he narrates how those events shaped his engagement in political life.

C: 19 Aralık'ta ben küçüktüm. 19 Aralık'tan bir iki sene sonra, 2002 gibi, ölüm oruçları halen devam ediyordu, ama kamuoyu bilmiyor. Biz de ölüm oruçları bitti falan sanıyoruz. Ama 2002 yılında devrimci yayınlar gelince öğrendim, ölüm oruçları halen sürüyormuş. kimsenin haberi yok. Halen devam ediyor bu iş dedik. Sonra baktık herkes bırakmış, bütün örgütler bırakmış bir tek bu örgüt kalmış. Bu iş niye böyle oldu kardeşim? Hani devrimciler sözünden dönmezdi. Devrimciler kararlılıkla yürüdü, devrimciler zafere kadar giderdi. niye bıraktı bu insanlar ölüm orucunu? Bunlar niye bırakmadı? Bunları böyle sormaya başladım. Bu benim siyasi tarihimde çok önemli bir etken oldu, ölüm oruçları. Benim dönemimde devrimciliğe başlayan, benim yaşıtım gençlerin hepsi, abartısız söylüyorum hepsi, ölüm oruçlarından etkilenmiştir. Biz devrimciliğe tabut kaldıra kaldıra başladık. Daha küçücük, bir sürü tabut kaldırdık bir sürü. yani ben katıldığım cenaze sayısını hatırlamıyorum. 20 30 tane cenazeye



katılmışımdır. Öyle oldu yani. Direnenin yanında savaşmayı seçtik yani.

T: Peki ölüm orucu sonunda sen bir sorumluluk hissettin mi?

C: Tabi canım çok. Müthiş bir direniş gibi görünüyordu. Halen de öyle olduğuna inanıyorum. Çok zor. Hapishanede çok açlık grevi yaptım, üç gün, beş gün, bir hafta. 10 gündü en fazla. Mesela Berkan Abatay'ın hikayesini okudum. O beni çok etkilemiştir. Beşiktaş çarşı'nın eski üyelerinden kendisi, ve ölüm orucunda rekor kırmıştır. 589 gün direndi dünya rekoru. [...] Son şehit düşenleri canlı görebildim, sohbet edebildim, konuştum. Fatma Koyupınar'ın yanında bulundum. Son şehitlerden. Cezaevindeydi. hatta onun için gözaltına alındım. Sonra tahliye ettiler onu hapishanede ölmesin de dışarda ölsün diye ölümüne yakın. Şişli'de bir ev vardı,orada yatıyordu. yanına gidip geliyordum. onunla sohbet ettik mesela. Onu gördüm, yakından gördüm. Ellerine dokundum. Bunlar ömür boyu unutmayacağım şeyler.<sup>60</sup>

Testimony to the resistance and collective memory of deaths of revolutionaries transmits its affect into the formation of political subjectivity (Collins, 2004). Cemal's narrative shows that his testimony is not only a source of knowledge, but more importantly, an embodiment of memory of violence. When he says that "I saw her up close, I touched her hands", the affective memory is transferred through the body into Cemal's individuality. At this very moment of testimony, there occurs an exchange between the subject of revolutionary and the subject of witness. As I mentioned before, the body of the loss is out of the control of the loss itself. Silence and vulnerability of the dead body is protected and reproduced in the memory of the witness. Thus this testimony does not only make the witness the bearer of knowledge of the loss, but it gives an agency to the survivor. When Cemal associates his revolutionary identity with

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<sup>60</sup>C: I was too young in 19 December. One or two years later after 2000, the death fast action was still continuing, but the public did not know. We also knew that the death fast action was finished. In 2002, I learned it was still continuing when I explored revolutionary papers. Even it had been still continued, no one knew anything. We said it was still active. Then, all political groups but one (DHKP-C) abandoned the resistance. Why did it happen this way? I thought that the revolutionaries would not renege on a promise, that they would proceed to the victory steadfastly. So, I asked myself why did they abandon the death fast action, and why did not the others? This took an important place in my political history. In my period, I say, without exaggeration, that all of those who call themselves as revolutionary were impressed by the death fast actions. We started to being revolutionary through carrying the coffins. Although we were too young, we carried many coffins so much so that I do not remember how many there are. I think that I attended twenty or thirty funerals. That just happened that way. We have been on the resistant's side. T: Did you feel a kind of responsibility for those actions?

C: Of course, too much. It seemed to me an incredible resistance, it seems so still. It is very difficult to start the death fast. In the prison, I started many hunger strikes for five days or a week. Ten days at most. I understood what being hungry means there. [...] For instance, I read Berkan Abatay's story. It impressed me too much. He was one of the oldest members of Beşiktaş Çarşısı, and he set a record in the death fast through surviving 589 days. He resisted for 589 days. This guy impressed me. [...] I could also see the last martyrs personally, I could talk with them. I was with Fatma Koyupınar, who is one of them. She was in the prison. I was also taken into custody for her. Then, before her death, she was released from the prison to die outside, rather than in the prison. She was staying in a house in Şişli. I was going to her sometime and we had a conversation. I saw her up close. I touched her hands. Those are things I cannot forget forever.

the coffins he carried, what is at issue is that he activates the agency, which the testimony and the mourning to dead bodies frames, in his political subjectivity. The body politics is, therefore, freed from the dominion of state power, and it is achieved in those transfers through the body of the victim.. The ultimate attempt to the political body at time of the death to preserve his/her subjectness and political existence which state power attempts to destroy completely is acquired in the testimonial act and through the formation of new political subjectivities.

In this sense, Butler argues the relationship between mourning, body and politics. According to Butler, in the context of political violence, "[t]he body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of other, but also to touch, and to violence, and bodies put us at risk of becoming the agency and instrument of all these as well. Although we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own. The body has its invariably public dimension" (Butler, 2004: 26). The body is also the domain of political struggle. According to well-known formulation of Foucault (1984), power functions its dynamics and claims its sovereignty over the subject through biopolitical structures and governmentalizing practices. Yet, in the context of political subjects who are excluded from the domains of the general rule, what occurs is not conventional governmentalizing practices, but rather the suspension of the division between life and death. Not being sacrificed, the capacity of power to destroy his/her subjectness and deprive the subject of political existence (Agamben, 1998). Thus the body of political subjects who poses a threat against sovereign power is aimed to transform into a mere object of political power of the state. In this sense, the heroic moments of revolutionaries in Okmeydanı is an ultimate struggle against the intervention of power ; the struggle for the decision over his/her life and death.

The attempt of state violence, however, does not prevent the transfer of the struggle of political subjects into the formation of new subjectivities. In testimony and mourning, what is preserved or transferred is this struggle of protecting the political existence of bodies. Heroic resistance of revolutionaries in the death fast actions has imprinted its affect into the very formation of youth subjectivities. Mourning and commemoration of dead revolutionaries in funerals, political graffiti, political text exceeds the facts of victims' stories, but functions as an emotional reminder. This demonstrates changing feature of testimony and memory in terms of its role in

formation of subjectivities. Wieviorka (cited in Hirsch and Spitzer, 2009) explains this new direction of testimony:

Today [...] the purpose of testimony is no longer to obtain knowledge. Time has passed and the historian does not trust a memory in which the past has begun to blur and which has been enriched by various images since the survivor's return to freedom. The mission that has devolved to testimony is no longer to bear witness to inadequately known events, but to keep them before our eyes. Testimony is to be a means of transmission to future generations. (Wieviorka, 1994: 24).

Thus testimony acquires an affective status because it is no longer adequate to know past events and narrate stories of political violence. What affects the witness-subject is the transmission of memory through gestures, mournings and silences of the victim. Power of memory of political violence is underlied by not only remembrance but its transformative effect on subjects, its transmission to future subjectivities. Halil also remember one of this kind of affective testimonies. His account interestingly resembles Cemal's narrative. He also narrates Berkan Abatay's story with his heroic personality and resistance. Since the 2000s, he also forms his political subjectivities around the deaths and mournings.

Benim tam kendime geldiğim dönemler siyaset olarak. Dedim ya daha demin dışarıdan çok anlayamıyorsun. Tabi yaşımız da küçük, çoçuğuz. Onu da anlayamıyoruz ama, etkileniyorsun ölüm oruçlarından haliyle. İnsanlar ölüyor, feda eylemleri yapıyor, yanarak can veriyorlar. Sen gidiyorsun, hapisane önünde eylemlere, Tayad'lı aileleri görüyorsun. Onlara saldırıyorlar hiçbir kurum kapısını açmıyor. Onları görüyorsun takip ediyorsun. [...] Yemek yemiyorlar. Yaşar mı diyorsun yemek yemeden insan. Gördüm bizzat gördüm cenaze evine gittim, kendilerini gördüm ziyaret ettim. O dönem hızlıydı bilirsin sende. Her gün bir şehit veriliyordu. İşte hapishaneden çıkardılar ya ölüm orucundakileri, sözde hediye verdiler, tahliye ettiler. Dışarda başladılar. Her gün gittim mesela. [...] Ölüm orucunda mesela Berkan Abatay vardı. Beşiktaşlı Çarşı'lıydı. Mesela onun cenazesine gitmiştim, 589 bin ölüm orucunda kalıyor. Gördüm yani orada, gözlerim doldu. Herkes böyle çevresinde dolaşiyor musalla taşının, alnından öpüyordu. Ben de öptüm. Sadece kemik. Deri yapışmış üstüne. Dokundum ona. İlk onun cenazesine gitmiştim zaten. Sonra tabi daha çok gittim bilmem kimin cenazesine falan. Orada etkileniyorsun.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>This era was that I realized myself in political terms. As I said, you could not understand very well from outside. Of course, we are also too young, we were impressed of the death fast actions anyway. People were dying, sacrificing themselves, burning to die. We were going to protests in front of the prisons, witnessing the families from TAYAD. They were attacking to them, and no organizations did not help. You were witnessing those people. [...] They were not eating anything. I asked myself could they live without eating. I witness them personally. I went to funeral

In commemorative acts such as funerals, marches, many young people find and invest new meanings in collective memory of political violence. Collective memory is thus gained new meanings in performativities of political youth, leading to also new interpretations of individual memory. Personal memories of youth is reframed around collective remembrance of memory and history (Halbwachs, 1992). In the axis of collective/individual memory, youth in Okmeydanı construct their identities and political futures. The memory of collective and personal memories is reappropriated by youth not as a distant past, but a repertoire of the mixture of past and present. In the settings of precarious conditions, they find new attachments in this mourning acts to develop their selves. Thus ritual acts of commemoration is not a mere remembrance or grief of violence, but also they include key elements in which they find meanings about their lives and futures. Commemorative acts coincides with the precarity of the life in which the urban youth feels a kind of frustration about family and education. In commemorative ceremonies, meanings and interpretations of the events exceed beyond mere mourning, and transmit new possibilities into individualities. The meanings youth invests into those acts are, thus changed in time and space, and reinterpreted by the present social and political conditions. As Paul Connerton argues, "[t]hey [rites] are held to be meaningful because rites have significance with respect to a set of further non actions, to the whole life of a community. Rites have the capacity to give value and meaning to the life of those who perform them" (Connerton, 1989: 45).

Here the question of what kind of meanings young people find in the bodies of revolutionaries and collective memory of political violence takes an important place. Many young people who perform mourning find their vulnerability exacerbated by state violence. It creates a kind of tie which connects the subject with the victim. Thus the mourning evolves from the remembrance into transformative acts of subjects. The bodies of dead revolutionaries imprint the precarity of those who mourn the loss. This mourning, therefore, urge subjects to preserve their selves in precarious conditions. It creates a new kind of collectivity based political life which individual resist his/her against state violence. There is no longer the underlying conditions of the security of

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homes, I visited and saw them there. It was a very fast process, you know. Everyday one of them was becoming martyr. After those who were in death fast actions were released from the prison as a so-called gift, they started outside. I went to them everyday. [...] For instance, there was a guy, Berkan Abatay who was a member of Beşiktaş Çarşı group. I did go to his funeral. He resisted for 589 days. I saw him there, my eyes filled with tears. Everyone was walking around the coffin rest, and they were kissing his forehead. I did kiss as well. He was all skin and bone, I mean, his skin was clung to his bones. I touched him. This was the first funeral I attended. Afterwards I also attended many funerals. You are really impressed there.

subject and life itself. Thus when youth witnesses the devastating consequences of state violence, what is at stake is not only to take revenge for the loss of revolutionaries with whom, in Okmeydanı, many young people feel a kind of kinship intimacy, but to requestion the integrity of their lives. The struggle of a dead revolutionary to protect his/her subject against the state power is thus transferred into the struggle of the witness. The body altered by violence becomes the embodiment of state violence and sovereign power. It gains a material existence through which young people is urged to challenge the reliable conditions of life. In the condition of suspension of the line between life and death, the mourning and testimony is not only witnessing to the loss or the grief for those who are killed or sacrificed themselves. Rather, it is the testimony to their own vulnerabilities. Depoliticizing attempts of state power through the exclusion of those at the margins of the political order are challenged by the remembrance and mourning of those subjects in the way that witness-subjects gain a political dimension and engage with the political struggle to protect their selves.

Judith Butler demonstrates the exchanges between mourning and politics. He argues that mourning is not only a commemorative act, but also it includes an effect in the formation of the self. The mourning of the Other subject does not mean that those who perform the mourning share similarities with the loss. He argues:

Perhaps, [...] one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly for ever. Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation [...] the result of which one cannot know in advance. There is losing, as we know, but there is also the transformative effect of loss [...].(Butler, 2004: )

Butler argues that with the mourning of the loss, subject encounters with his/her own precarity, and this encountering is deepened by the dehumanizing social and political conditions. This engenders the new basis of thinking a collectivity in the community with ties developed around the mourning. This kind of mourning creates a powerful dependence on the subjects we have lost. The effect of loss and mourning underlies the place of the subject in the community, leading to new possibilities of political communities. The mourning of the loss reproduces the spectral existence of the other subject in the inside of the self. Thus the grief creates new collectivitive bounds in which subjects share their concerns, fears and anxieties. He explains the tie emerged when the mourning occurs.

Many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary position and is, in that sense, depoliticizing. But I think it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility. If my fate is not originally or finally separable from yours, then the "we" is traversed by a relationality that we cannot easily argue against; or, rather, we can argue against it, but we would be denying something fundamental about the social conditions of our very formation. (Butler, 2004: 22-23)

In this formation, commemorative ceremonies and collective memory of political violence are thus not the present accounts of past events, but rather, the embodied acts of memory through new subjectivities. In the relationality in the act of grief, Butler argues that "grief contains the possibility of apprehending a mode of dispossession that is fundamental to who I am". The loss of the others "haunts the way I am" (Butler, 2004: 28). Thus this sociality of the loss imprints the structures of individual formation.

In the context of Okmeydanı, the visibility of collective memory of political violence thus takes many forms in the space and the body. Those spectral reminders are not stuck in the phantasmatic realm. Rather they take materialized forms which gives the power more effectively to its haunting effect. For instance, there are three streets which I know myself called as the names of revolutionaries killed or disappeared after taking into custody in these streets. The name of the streets are known by local people as these killed or disappeared revolutionaries. These streets, in its very material existence, reminds many of them of the possible dangers of state violence. The absence of the body still exists to be present in the space. Through this embodiment, the reality state violence and threatening conditions gains inexpressible representations in the minds of young people in uncanny situations. One night, after I met with one of my interviewees, he offered me to accompany to the bus station. While walking, when I attempted to enter a street which I thought was a shortcut to the bus station, he stopped me from entering the street. When I asked why, he said that it could be dangerous at the late hour and reminded me the guy killed by the police a few years ago. Although I do not know what the street exactly evoked in his mind, but it is clear that not only the ghostly presence of the body of revolutionary still remains in the space, but also the terror of state violence is reproduced in the space with the uncanny references to its power. That is what Arextaga calls the "absent-presence" of state power (2005). As she

points out, “Reality was penetrated by an absence that could not be apprehended” (2005: 129). The state power thus appears in the uncanny presences of space and body. As in the funerals of dead revolutionaries, young people encounter not only with heroic actions of political figures, but the uncanny presence of the loss in their lives. Arextaga says, referring to Freud and Lacan, “this strangeness at the heart of the familiar is precisely what calls the uncanny. It provides a spectral reality, for the specter is none other than [...] familiar stranger (Gordon, 1997), the recurrent ‘visibility of the invisible’ (Derrida, 1997: 101), a kind of suppressed knowledge embodied in immaterial matter” (Arextaga, 2005: 194). In this sense, as I explained before, the affective dimension of the loss and threatening political violence is based on the uncanny encounter of youth with their own vulnerabilities. They are urged to scrutinize their futures and form subjectivities around political movements. The political realm is thus developed around the affective spaces.

Another example is from a conversation with a local man, Hakan (29). He knows the important local political figures in Okmeydanı since he came in 1999. While wandering around the street, he showed me a man walking across the street, and told me his story. He started his conversation, emphasizing “what he has become”.

Bu adam Okmeydanı'nın en korkulan adamıydı 1990'larda, Çakal Erhan derlerdi. Eski kabadayılardan, sonradan politikleşti. Bir sürü politik eylemi bu örgütlerdi, önemli bir figürdü. 2000'lerin başında cezaevine girdikten sonra, ölüm orucu eylemine başladı. Devlet zorla müdahale etti eylemi sonlandırması için. Bilirsin, ölüm oruçlarının zorla kesilmesi vücut üzerinde birçok hasar bırakıyor. Bu da Wernicke-Korsakoff sendromunu çekiyor. Şimdi ne olup bittiğini hatırlamıyor. Öyle sokaklar delice dolaşılıyor. Kendinde değil yani.<sup>62</sup>

The mutilated body is transformed into the object of political power. He is no longer the political subject of himself, but the expression of the ultimate domain of state violence over his body. He is no longer a threat for the state, because as Hakan points out, “he is not himself” anymore. His body is abstracted from his subject. Ironically, his political struggle was erased from his memory by the state force. He embodies the final residue of life without political existence, memory and the knowledge of who he

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<sup>62</sup>This man was the most fearful guy in Okmeydanı, called Çakal Erhan, in the 1990s. He was an old kadabayı (bully) guy, who later became politicized. He was an important figure to organize political actions here. After his imprisonment in the beginning of the 2000s, he started the death fast action in the prison. The state intervened in the situation to stop the action forcibly. You know, the force interruption of the death fast leaves many damages over the body. He is also suffering from Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome. Now he cannot remember what happened straightly. He is wandering around the streets insanely. That is, he is not himself.

is. It becomes only an artifact of the powerful state violence, and functions as a reminder of the erasure of subject from time and space. This prevents local people from giving definite meanings to the political subject, neither a martyr, nor a hero. Traumatic existence of mutilated subject evokes his spectral body who embody the formidable power of the state. This kind of tortured or mutilated bodies is evocative of the possible danger of the state on being a subject. For many young people, political life is assumed not as a secure place distant from everyday life, but it is the struggle to protect the unity of being a subject. Allen Feldman argues this detachment in mutilated bodies in the context of Northern Ireland. He refers Adorno's concept of "the absolute impossibility of individualized death [...] in the detachment of the body from the self"(Feldman, 1991: 64).

This detachment is a prerequisite for abstracting the body from the self. The body is transcribed into imaginary space through the magic of torture which defaces the body as a singularity and constructs it as an abstract value form of a spatial referent. In this process, the body emerges as a political construct and the self as apolitical residue, an excess left over from the process that transforms the body into a political form. (Feldman, 1994: 64)

The political form developed by violence is the domain of sovereign power, not the political existence of subjects. Thus all struggle for political existence is also a struggle for the protecting the body/subject axis. What political subjects in Okmeydanı offer in this struggle is sacrificial and heroic acts over their bodies to reach an "individualized death", which I turn to later. That is, it is the struggle to protect his/her subjectness at the moment of the death. The horrific visibility of so-called insanity of *Çakal Erhan* is not only his medical situation, but more importantly, his evocative image of the threatening failure to protect subject's singularity in the settings of state violence. Thus, the political struggle seems the way of maintaining a complete self.

So far, I have delineate the affective transmission of the figure of political subject into the formation of political subjectivities. In the context of political violence, I argue that collective memory of political violence embodied in the axis of space/body urges urban youth to think about their vulnerabilities and precarious conditions of life. The testimony to devastating consequences of state violence and the loss of revolutionaries is transferred to the formation of subjectivities in the way that young people realize in the mirroring relationship that their lives are insecure and their mere existence as subject is itself in question in the context of the state of exception. If the



political realm emerges for youth as a way of dealing with the threats against their existence, how do they consider the political struggle and create a language to represent their testimonies and collective memory? Is there a possibility to express the uncanny conditions they experience? Which terms or acts do they use to assert justifications for their political lives? How are their testimonies embodied and represent in their lives?

To be sure, youth should deal with their testimonies to the loss and state violence. The problematic of testimony is based on the difficulty of expressing it (Agamben, 1999 ; Hirsch and Spitzer; 2009). Agamben says that testimony could not be achieved through language and conventional representations (ibid.). If there is a testimony, this occurs in such a condition that language and narratives could not signify the core of testimony. He argues that “there is something like an impossibility of bearing witness” to traumatic experiences in the context of the Holocaust. He elaborates that: “[...] testimony is the disjunction between two impossibilities of bearing witness. The language of testimony is a language that no longer signifies and that, in not signifying, advances into what is without language, to the point of taking on a different insignificance — that of the complete witness [...]” (Agamben, 1999: 34-39). Again in the same context, Hirsch and Spitzer also argues that “[t]he paradox of the witness’s ‘I’ is an essential element of the contradiction between the necessity and the impossibility of bearing witness to the Holocaust” (2009: 395). Yet, these do not mean that testimony travels through affective embodiments. Hirsch and Spitzer also says that “if the main function of testimony now is not to inform factually but to transmit affectively, it cannot do so by purely verbal means, whether or written (ibid. 394)”. Rather, testimony occurs through the embodied memory of the witness in his/her life. Moreover, in the context of Okmeydanı, testimony is also actualized through giving agency to the witness. Testimony and collective memory of past events are themselves included in the formation of subjectivities. As mentioned before, in this context, testimony is not only for the pain of the Other, but also a prophetic telling of precarious conditions in the future. What is witnessed is not over, but still present in the act of testimony. Another political subject could be killed, tortured or imprisoned. Many of young people in Okmeydanı are not sure what is going tomorrow, or could not envisage a definite future. Thus the testimony to the event from outside include something of the very inside of witness. In this sense “testimonies are acts in the present” (Hirsch, Spitzer: 2009: 402) for the present and future. Beyond the factuality of testimony, what is important is what

meanings young people find, acquire and change about their lives in these acts. These are testimonies to their own vulnerabilities. They are embodied in the formation of subjectivity. They call for new actions and possibilities in this formation of youth, closing up some possibilities.

How collective memory and testimony enter into the subjectivity of political youth is through the affective idiom, *bedel*. Although the literal meaning of *bedel* means cost, price or compensation for something, in the context of Okmeydanı, it means a kind of responsibility after sacrificial act of political subject. *Bedel* is achieved through imprisonment, killing, self-sacrifice or tortures. In any way, it connotes the devastating consequences political subjects experience. *Bedel* is the sacred domain not only sustaining a specific political project, but the freedom of the people for which they struggled. It is a kind of connectivity between those who sacrificed themselves and those for whom they struggled. *Bedel* also shows the ultimate struggle of political subjects for their freedom and lives. Sacrificial acts of the political is transferred into collective memory of young people as the form of *bedel*. At this transmission, political death, which is attempted to frame as “bare life” by the state violence, convey political existence to the memories of those who remember and witness. *Bedel* obtains its existence through a spatial affective relationship between those who died for the community and those who survived in the community. It exists in the imagery of the community that connect people each other and to the space, relationships, and collective life. In every formation of individualities, it haunts the way who one is. As a result, the grief of the loss brings with a kind of guilt or responsibility that people should take into consideration, because it affects the narratives of their mere existence. It creates a language specific to the space which are used by people to make sense of who they are. This creates a new kind of intimacy based on political deaths not only for the political struggle, but also for sustaining their identities. Whether transcending the discourse of *bedel* or encapsulated by it, young people are compelled to face this powerful social force which creates many relationships in the neighbourhood.

Testimony and collective memory no longer need to be narrated but performed in the formation of lives. Memory of political deaths is framed in the discourse of sacrifice (*feda*), but it is actualized in that of *bedel*. Sacrificial acts of political subjects gives responsibility to those living in the community through the discourses of *bedel*. It is beyond the passive remembrance of political martyrdom; it is about a kind of

existential responsibility for the community which call for a political struggle to sustain and protect the community. As a result, it is an affective active discourse which inform the possibilities of future for youth.

As I discussed in the funerals of martyrs, the embodiement of political deaths in the space and the testimonies to political violence, “the transformative effect of the loss” (Butler, 2006) occur in the narratives of *bedel*. “They died for us” is a common phrase, which I heard from my interviewees, that points out that deaths of the Other are considered as an essential condition for sustaining the life of the I. What many of young people feel in *bedel* is ethical and moral responsibility of life. In *bedel*, death is entwined with the life of witness. Thus, *bedel* is not only necessarily a traumatic memory, but also the social conditioning of young subjects. As a result, cultural memory of political violence does not seem to young people as a distant sphere to form their identities, but it gains its most powerful effect from its internality to life.

Sinan, 23 years old male, has told the powerful attachment to the space in the previous chapter. When I asked him about the death fast action and the struggle of revolutionaries in both Okmeydanı and the prisons, his narrative correspond the culturally sacralized memory. His account valorized sacrifices in terms of sustaining a worthy life.

S : O zaman hani denildi ki, biz yaşatmak için ölürüz dediler.. Ben ölmeyeyim diye milyonlarca insan öleceğine... Hani diyor ya nazım hikmet sen yanmazsan ben yanmazsam nasıl çıkar karanlıklar aydınlığa. Evet öleceğiz, ölebiliriz. Eğer bu halkın geleceğinde bir kurtuluş varsa, öleceğiz diyorlar. Adalet varsa öleceğiz diyorlar, devrimciler bunu diyor, feda savaşçıları bunu diyor. Evet ben öleceğim diyor, ama çocuklar ölmeyecek diyor.[...]

T: Peki, sen hissediyorsun ölümleri üzerinden direnmeleri konusunda?

S: Ölüme verdiği anlamla ilgili biraz da. Herkesin ölümü verdiği farklı bir anlam vardır. Onlar ölüme nasıl bakıyor? Ben kolumu hareket ettirebilirim, yemek yiyebilirim bakabilirim görebilirim. Bunlar onlara yaşamak olarak gelmiyor. Yaşamaksa insanca yaşamak. Onların asıl yaşama sebebi, düşünceleri, halk kültürü, sevdikleri, yaşama verdikleri anlamlar. [...] Mesela bazıları ölümü kutsadığımızı söylüyorlardı. Halbuki o insanlar hayatı herkesden çok seviyorlar. Sevdikleri için zaten ölüme gidiyorlar. Hayatı seviyorlar ama diğer

insanlardan farklı seviyorlar. Daha yaşanılabilir bir hayat bir hayat kurmak için mücadele ediyorlar. Evet yaşamak, ama nasıl yaşamak?<sup>63</sup>

“To die to make us live” creates expected social norms for sacrifice. Sacrifices in the political struggle are reenacted in the experiences of subjects. Sinan’s account shows that he carries the responsibility of *bedel* in his life. For him, the responsibility calls for new performances in the political life to deal with the burden of *bedel*. The social power of *bedel* forms and subjugated his subject to the language of resistance. *Bedel* emerges as a power against the state power, within the boundaries of the violent-ridden space. His attachment and/or testimony to the past of political violence and deaths appear as an active force which attaches, or entraps, him to the cycle of sacrifice acts and the burden of *bedel*. It constitutes a “symbolic domain”, with Lacan’s term, which force the formation of subjectivities within the expected norms, insofar as youth give meanings to their lives in this domain. To be sure, to define the self’s place in the world in this way is not an inevitable process for everyone, nor do subjects not have any power to decide not to be exposed to the subjection. Of course, subjectivities could flourish in different ways, which I will discuss in the next chapter. Yet, what I emphasize here is that in the settings of the suspension between life and death, the mark of political violence, resistance and deaths imprint on minds of youth. They become points of origin of the formation of the self. That is why I repeat my initial argument that the political life is itself the life of subject in Okmeydanı. These are not two separate domains. For political subjects, there is no a distinction between everyday life and political life.

Then, what kind of actions does the symbolic domain demand from young people? Life becomes noteworthy in the very beginning with political struggle, and so, it will be sustained again in the domain of the political. Just as the very construction of Okmeydanı is associated with the honorable struggle of political groups since the 1970s, meanings and values young people give to their lives revolve around sacrifices of

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<sup>63</sup> S : At that time, those people said that we would die to make ones live. Rather than millions of people being died... As Nazım Hikmet says, “If I do not burn, If you do not burn, If we do not burn, how will darkness come to light?”. Yes maybe we can die. If there is a freedom or a justice in the future of the people, they — the revolutionaries, sacrifice warriors (feda savaşçıları) say to do this. They say we will die, but our children will not. [...]

T : What do you feel about their resistances through death?

S : It is about the meaning you give to death. There are many meanings everyone gives to it. How do they look at death? I can move with my arm, I can see, I can eat... They do not see these things as living. If there is a living, it must be humanly. The reasons of living for them is their thoughts, people’s culture, people they love, meanings they give to life. [...] Some people say that we glorify death. However, they love to live more than some else so such so that they do not hesitate to die. They love differently. They struggle to create a worth living world. To live, yes, but how?

political deaths, embodied in the idiom of *bedel*. In this sense, “local structures of feeling” (Das and Kleinman, 2000: 11) sustain the politicization of urban youth in Okmeydanı. Sinan also redefines his life around these structures. For him, the meaning of living could be noteworthy in the way of political struggle. Since he was fifteen, he has become a sympathizer of DHKP-C, and involved in many political actions organized in the neighbourhood. He was imprisoned at his eighteen in the F-type prison in Tekirdağ. He was accused of being a member of DHKP-C, and kept in the prison for three years. When I asked him about his initial feelings, he told his story around the idiom of *bedel*.

T : Tutuklandığın zaman ne düşündün?

S : Ya aslında o zaman bir bilinç oluyor yani. Çünkü senden önce bedel ödeyenler var. Biz tutsak düşmüşüz ama, bunun yanı sıra kendini feda edenler canını veren devrimciler var. Hani bize çok koymadı. Tutsak düştük. İster istemez aileni özlüyorsun ama bedel ödemek gerekiyor. Bir şeyler yapmak için hak kazanmak için, bedel ödemedi alamıyorsun yani. Her türlü zulüm uygulanıyor ama hiçbir hakkın olmuyor, alamıyorsun. Bedel ödeyeceksin bedel ödemeyi göze alıyorsun. Okmeydanı’nda oturmak bile bir bedel gerektiriyor. Sen mücadele etsen de etmesen de bu düzen sana bedel ödetiyor, ya aç bırakıyor ya süründürüyor. Sen de bedel ödeyeceksin. Bilinçli bir şekilde bir ödeyeyim hakkımı alayım, haklarımızı kazanalım, insan olduğumuzu hatırlatalım. Bunun için de bedel ödemeyi göze aldığın, için çok da koymuyor. Ama aileni özlüyor musun? Özlüyorsun illaki. Bunun dışında, gittiğin hapisanede yoldaşlarının olduğunu biliyorsun. İşkence yapacaklarını bile bile bir güven içerisinde sin yani. Kendine bir güven oluyor.

T : Peki sen bedel ödemeye başladığını düşündün mü?

S : Evet tabiki. Bedel ödediğini biliyorsun. Niçin yaptığını biliyorsun, halk için devrimciler için. Bunları biliyorsun. Zaten hapisaneye girdiğin an bile neden hapisanede olduğunu anlıyorsun. Sana, hapisaneye girdiğinde, soyun diyorlar çırılçıplak soyun, onursuz bir şekilde. Kabul etmiyorsun onlar da işkence yapıyor, saldırıyorlar. Bu bile senin ne kadar doğru bir mücadele verdiğini gösteriyor. Çünkü onlar aşağılık bir şekilde insanı çırılçıplak soyarak aramak istiyorlar. Bu düzeni yansıtır. Bu düzenin nasıl bir pislik olduğunu yansıtır.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>T : What did you think and feel when you were imprisoned?

S : In fact, you have a consciousness. Because before you, there are people who paid bedel (bedel ödemek). We were arrested, but there are revolutionaries who sacrificed their lives. It did not hit us too much. We were arrested, you were necessarily missing your family. But it should be to pay bedel for doing something. You could not gain the rights without paying bedel. You are subjected to every kind of oppression, but you could not gain any right. You must pay bedel. You are running the risk of bedel. Even living in Okmeydanı requires a bedel. Whether you struggle or not, the order makes you pay bedel, improving you. At this point, you must pay bedel to search for and gain our

His narrative shows the responsibility of *bedel* incumbent upon him. His account that “even living in Okmeydanı requires a *bedel*” provides an insight to local structures of ethical responsibilities. For him, testimony to those who paid *bedel* for the sake of people urges him to take new actions to carry out his responsibilities. The burden of *bedel* is performed in his political struggle. The question of how he is encapsulated by the discourse of *bedel* with ease is again based his experiences of the life under the shadow of state violence. Being a completely naked before the prison officers symbolizes his “bare life” before state power. When he says “you are ordered to undress completely naked in a dishonorable way. [...] It represents the order. It shows how dirty the order is”, he realizes the vulnerability of the self. There is not any worthiness of his subject and body before the state. Bareness of the body itself reaffirms the ultimate claim of the state power over his subject. *Bedel* becomes thus not only the responsibility he inherited from collective memory of political violence, but also becomes a meaningful framework through which his life gains his value and worthiness. For him, a meaningful life in the context of political struggle requires him to pay *his bedel*. It is par excellence the incarnation of cultural memory of political violence in his subject.

Jindar, a 23-years old Kurdish female, also defines her identity around collective memory of the struggle of Kurdish movement. Her two uncles was participated in PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) in 1991 as soon as she was born. She was born in Hatay, lived there since her family migrated to Okmeydanı when she was seventeen. She became politicized with the interaction of political groups associated with Kurdish movement in Okmeydanı. Although she witnessed traumatic experiences of state violence in Hatay through numerous police invasions due to the political condition of her relatives, the political groups in Okmeydanı provided her with the opportunity to search for the formation of her identity in the axis of political struggle. In this process, she reappropriates memories of her family in the construction of her self around the collectivity of Kurdish movement. She remember her familial past in the present .

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rights, to remind that we are also human beings. Since you dare to pay *bedel* to do this, it does not upset you too much. But are were you missing your family? Of course. Moreover, you know there are many comrades in the prison you were sent to. Knowing that you would be tortured, you feel safe there anyway.

T: Did you think that you started to pay *bedel* ?

S: Yes, of course. You knew you paid your *bedel*. You knew why you were doing this, for the people and revolutionaries. After all, when you entered the prison, you knew why you were imprisoned. You are ordered to undress completely naked in a dishonorable way. When you refuse, they torture and attack you. Even this shows how correct your struggle is, because they want to search you completely nakedly. It represents the order. It shows how dirty the order is.

T : Peki kürt olarak yaşadığın sıkıntılar oldu mu? Varsa, hatırlayabiliyor musun?

J : Tabiki. benim ismim jindar, anlamı da yaşam işte. Çok şey yapıyorlardı, ismimi söyleyemiyorlardı. bu nasıl isim böyle falan. ben çok kavga ederdim kendi ismim için. Ama Kürtlük konusunda konusunda hiç zorluk çekmedim. Ama küçükken eve baskınlar yapılırdı o zamanlar küçüktüm. çok küçüktüm o zamanlar. Buraya gelene kadar da polis baskınıydı vardı hep.<sup>65</sup>

The struggle of her uncles appears as spectral figures in her memories. Her family has not received any information about them. Yet, their absence still sustains the presence in Jindar's narrative. The absence is also embodied in the police invasions to retrieve any information about them through interrogating her father.

J :Zaten ben doğduğumdan beri, 23 yıldır, benim dayım amcam orada. Benim sadece bir tane fotoğrafım dayımla varç oda küçüklük fotoğrafım bebekken böyle. Kafama sarı kırmızı yeşil ip bağlamışlar. Newroz kutlamasıdır. Böyle tutmuş fotoğraf çekmiş. Ondan sonra gitmişler zaten 1991'de. 23 yıldır yani benim yaşım la bir.

T : Peki hatay'da da aynı boyutta etkileniyor muydun?

J : Evet, etkileniyordum. Etkilenmemek mümkün değil. Çünkü her gece evimize baskın yapılıyordu. Babamı götürüyorlardı amcamı götürüyorlardı. İşkence alıyolardı. 2-3 hafta. Gelemiyorlardı, bırakmıyorlardı. Etkileniyorum tabi ama hatırlamıyorum. Çünkü çok küçüğüm o zamanlar. Küçüğüm falan onun için,etkilensem de hatırlamıyorum tam. Ama buraya geldikten sonra her şey göz önünde yani, herşeyi artık düşünebiliyorum hissedebiliyorum yani.<sup>66</sup>

Her memory of family members frame her belonging to Kurdish identity. She rediscovers her history and identity through the link of memory and narrative of the past. As Leyla Neyzi (1999) points out, youth finds new ways of belonging in the context of personal and political search in a different manner from older generations.

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<sup>65</sup> T : Do you have any experiences about your Kurdish identity? If any, do you remember any of them?

J : Of course. My name is Jindar, which means life. There were some troubles; many people could not tell my name. They say what kind of name it is. I used to fight for my name. But I did not face any problem about my Kurdish identity, I could do my best to express myself. However there were always police invasions at the time I was a child. Before migrating to here, police invasions occurred regularly.

<sup>66</sup> J : Since I was born, my uncles have been there for 23 years. I have only a photograph with my maternal uncle. It is a photo of my infancy. In that photo, my head is covered with yellow-red-green ropes. It was a celebration of Newroz. He grabbed me and our photo was taken. And then they went to the struggle. 23 years have passed since then, in 1991. It is equal to my age.

T : Were you being impressed at the same level also in Hatay?

J : Yes. It is impossible not to be impressed because every night our house was being invaded by the police. My father and uncle were being taken. They were being tortured and they could not return home for 2-3 weeks. They were not release them. I was being impressed but I do not remember well, because I was too young at that time. Even I was impressed too much, I could not remember very well because of my age. But, after coming here, everything is in sight of you. You can think and feel everything.

Jindar's account shows that her belonging with her community is reshaped around the political mobilization. After coming to Okmeydanı, encountering with another people who experienced same problems, she came to realize that her personal identity is not independent from the collective history. She tells this encountering while responding to her politicization in Okmeydanı.

J : Buradaki gençler gerçekten içinde büyüdüğü herşeyin farkındadır. Düşünsenize sizin bir arkadaşınız ya cezaevindedir ya gerilladır. Onların şehit haberleri gelir. Sen ne kadar parti'nin içerisinde olmasan da bir kere bile selamlaştım bir arkadaşınsa, insan etkilenebiliyor yani çok etkilenebiliyor burada..

T : Peki buraya geldiğin zaman yaşadıkları. Seninkilere benzeyen insanlarla tanıştın mı?

J : Aynen evet hep aynı bakıyorsun ya babası gözaltına alınmış, kaybedilmiş ya ya abisi oradadır ya dayısı oradadır. Ya hiçbiri yoksa bir arkadaşı oradadır, çok sevdiği bir arkadaşı oradadır. Rüyasındada komşusunu görmüştür. Hepsi öyleydi yani. Zaten benim arkadaşlarımın hepsi gitti biz iki kişi kaldık. Üç tanesinin şehit haberi geldi. Bir tanesi Kobani'de şehit düştü zaten. Bir tanesi zaten benim dayımın oğluydu, hem dayımın oğlu hem yoldaşımdı, hem de arkadaşımdı. Bir tanesi de benim arkadaşımdı. Birlikte çalışma yürüttüğümüz arkadaşlarımdı. İnsan ben bazen nasıl kaldırıyorum bunlar, düşünüyorum yani nasıl kaldırıyorum bunları, bu kadar acıyı.

T : Peki nasıl kaldırıyorsun? Neler düşünüyorsun?

J : Valla ne düşünüyorum bilmiyorum. Bana her zaman derler sen çok güleryüzlüsünüz. Ama bilmiyorlar ki böyle gerçekten kıyametler kopuyor. Ben bir şey yapamıyorum. Sen burada ne yapabilirsin ki? Çıkarırsın bir slogan atarsın ya da protesto edersin. Gözaltına alınırsın tutuklanırsın. Çünkü bir dosyam var senin göz önündesin zaten. Yani insan çok şey yapmak istiyor. Ben çok ağlarım, böyle gece oldumu tek kaldımmı çok ağlarım. Çünkü sen bir barış olacak diye düşünüyorsun, herşey duracak ölümler bitecek. Ve onların gelmesini bekliyorsun, bir gün bir bakıyorsun onların tabutları gelmiş. İnsan bilmiyorum ki...<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> J : Young people here are aware of everything in which they grew up. Think about, your friends are either in the prison or participated in the guerilla movement. We get the news that our friends became martyr. Even though you are not involed with the party, these could be your friends you met in your life. You might be impressed too much here. [...]

T : Have you ever met people who witnessed the experiences like yours?

J : Yes, exactly. You are seeing that either one's father was dissappeared in the custody, or one's brother or uncle was there (the PKK movement). If there is not any, someone's friend is there, one he/she loves too much is there. One maybe had a dream of his/her neighbour. All of them experienced same things. Most of my friends has already gone, two of us are here. We got the news of three of them which became martyrs. One of them was martyred in Kobani, another was my uncle's son, and also my comrade and friend of mine. The last was my frined. They were all friends with whom I carried out organizations. I think myself sometimes how could I bear that pain

T : How could you bear it? What do you think about them?

J : I do not know what I am thinking. People always say you are a very merry person. But they do not know a storm is breaking within my heart. I could not do anything, what can you do here? At most, you can shout slogans or protest,



Jindar's account emphasizes the unbreakable tie between her friends in political struggle and her individuality. Again, her feeling of *bedel* haunts the way she is. She could not think a self independent from collective memory. She narrates his attachment in the way that "you could not break the ties from your history" (*sen tarihinden kopamazsın*). This attachment urges her to sitck her subjectivity to the political struggle. She was imprisoned when she was eighteen. She frames the imprisonment as an inevitable consequence of 'her' history. When I asked her whether she thought her future would be lost in the political struggle, her account is important to show her endurance to the imprisonment with the reflection on the struggle of her community

Yani arkana dönüp baktığında, o kadar insan öldü, insanları bırak çocuklar öldü. Paramparça oldu çocuklar. Sen biliyorsun senin geleceğin budur yani, sen biliyorsun çünkü sen içindesin, sen herşeyi bırakmışsın yani. Hani diyorlar ya sen bu yola girdiğinde, gözaltını da göze alacaksın, öldürmeyi de. Her şeyi göze alacaksın. Sen onların hepsini göze alarak ediyorsun zaten. Ben bir tek cezaevinde söylemişim bir kere, çocukluğum gitti falan diye. Ama sonra yanındakine bakıyorsun, 22 yıldır cezaevinde 36 yıl almış. 22 yıldır cezaevinde ve 19 yaşında girmiş cezaevine. Bakıyorsun yanında bir anne var 15 yıldır içerde, 36 yıl almış, bir buçuk yaşında oğlu ile işkenceye alınıyor. Oğluna işkence yapılıyor, bir buçuk yaşındaki bir bebeğe işkence yapıyorlar, anne çözülsün diye. Ve o küçücük çocuğa işkence yapılıyor ama halen çözülüyor. Öyle bakıyorsun duruyorsun yani. 3 yıl diyorsun belki çoktur ama, yani senin için benim için çok olabilir, ama yanındakine baktığım zaman hemen susabiliyordum. 3 yıl ne ki baksana ömrü gitmiş diyebiliyorsun. [...] Bırakmak istesen de bırakamıyorsun. Diyorsun senin gerçekliğin var. Yani senin bu gerçekliğin var. Sen vazgeçemezsin.<sup>68</sup>

Her account that "I mean you have this reality. You should not give up" shows that collective memory of political violence becomes a powerful framework for her subjectivity. This framework also entraps her into certain possibilities to take actions in her life, closing off some possibilities. Structures of feelings and attachment to

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and then, you are arrested and imprisoned. Because they have a file of you. That is, you want to do many things. I cry too much when I am alone at nights. Because you think peace will come, everything will end, deaths will stop and you wait for their comings. Then you see that their coffins come. I do not know.

<sup>68</sup>When you look back the past, many people died. Let alone people, children died, they were torn to pieces. You know it is your future. That is, you know because you are inside of it, you gave up everything. As said always, when you enter this way, you have to face custody, killing and everything. You should face everything. I said once in the prison my childhood has gone, but when you look other prisoners, you see that one of them, punished for 36 years, has been in the prison for 22 years. She was imprisoned when she was nineteen. You see a mother who has ben in the prison for 15 years, and she was tortured with her one-and-a-half years old boy. He was tortured to make her confess. And when her little child was even tortured, she did not still confess anything. You think about them. Three-years imprisonment seems to me and you too much, but really, when I think others, I can easily keep quiet. Comparing that her life has gone, three-years imprisonment is nothing. [...] Even if you sometimes want to give up, you could not. You say yourself that there is your reality. I mean you have this reality. You should not give up.

collective memories which she did not choose subjugate her to the language of resistance and political struggle. Her desire is, of course, not the maintainance of violent conditions, but these conditions creates an ambivalent attachment to this sphere of which she struggle to free herself. In the compelling conditions of existence, as Thiranagama emphasizes well in the context of Sri-Lanka civil war, “[our] (disavowed) dependency on such frames, because they gave our life meaning, becomes ever more pertinent now when thinking about how those produced by war can negotiate life outside it” (2011: 12). As Jindar says “this is *your* future, this is *your* reality”, many young people in Okmeydanı do not think of recasting life meanings without ignoring political struggle. Referring to Butler(1997), Thiranagama explains the point in the sense that “the forces [of political violence] that make and unmake us are the sites of ceaselessly generative ambivalent attachments and investments” (2011: 12).

In conclusion, I have argued in this section that collective memory and testimony to political deaths are internalized by youth in the idiom of *bedel*. They become frames on which youth are dependent to form subjectivities. Collective memory of political events in Okmeydanı creates the basis of not only the politicization of youth but also the ways of belongings and the formation of the self. Since many young realize their own vulnerabilities and precarious conditions with the embodiment of state power in both space and body, collective memory of political life is not an external thing to youth, but an internal conditioning of their individualities. *Bedel* carries all those affective transmission of memory and testimony, and become an active force through wich youth find moral and ethical codes of life.

### **Encounters with the State : The Police**

Begona Arextaga is one of the prominent scholars who has emphasized the phanstasmatic character of the state power in her essays (2005). According to her, “the fictional reality” of the state gains its power from “an endless play of mirror images” (Arextaga, 2003). She asserts that “[i]t is in the act of killing, kidnapping, disappearances, and imprisonment that the state materializes as a powerful spectral reality, which marks the bodies and sould of those subjected to its practices” (ibid. 402). She points out in the context of the Basque country, the political groups engage with an imaginery identification with the state as as a subject of fear and desire. The presence of

the state appears as “a threatening force shaped by the collective experience of being overshadowed by an unfathomable power which can shape social life as a dangerous universe of surfaces and disguises” (Arextaga, 2005: 216). She elaborates that “this idea suggests a subjective dynamic that produces and reproduces the state as objects of fear and attachment of identification or disavowal” (Arextaga, 2003: 399).

Indeed, in Okmeydanı, the state appears as a figure towards which young people represents their anxieties, fears and struggles. However, to say that the phantasmatic figure of the state is reproduced by framing it as the object of political struggle does not mean that there are not any signs of the state power which youth in Okmeydanı experience. To be sure, the political actions of political groups with counter-violence against the state subjugate political subjects to a mirroring relationship, which I will turn in the next section. Yet, here my concern is that how the state is embodied and gains material existence in the imagery of youth. First of all, life is itself altered by state violence. Transmissions of collective memory of violence into the minds of youth is one dimension in which state power is materialized, which I discussed in the previous section.

The another dimension is the encounters with the state through performativities in public space. Arextaga is so right to emphasize the spectral existence of the state through humors, graffitis and symbolic boundaries in which local people of Okmeydanı feel safe in that, as I mentioned before, the exception and exclusion of the space is not only produced by the presence of the state, but also the symbolic reproduction of the space by people *inside*. When I first went to Okmeydanı, what I realized is that the boundaries of violence-ridden districts do not become visible with the checkpoints and always-present police patrols, but rather, with the symbolic meanings produced for a sacred space. Of course, there is always a police force in Okmeydanı. It is mainly located in the courtyard of a school, called Cemal Kamacı elementary school. Spaces of Okmeydanı include a very kafkaesque atmosphere due to the ghostly power of the state violence. Yet, at the same time, it is not so ghostly because of the possible intervention of police forces. As Arextaga points out, referring to Benjamin (1978), “emptied of content, the violence of law, as sovereign power, becomes ghostly and persecutory, giving ride to forms of paranoiac acting from the state as much as the subjects who encounter it. The ghostly, persecutory of law is incarnated in the police, a haunting figure invested with formless power, whose effects are seen as disappearances, corpses,

arrests, and interments but whose identity remains mysterious, as objects of constant speculation, rumor, and fear” (Arextaga, 2003: 406).

In this sense, the police becomes the haunting figure as the subject of fear which permeates everyday life of youth. Yeşim accounts her feelings about the presence of violence when she was a child.

O zamanlar polisin yanından geçemiyordum ben. Bakıyordum, kitleniyordum elindeki silaha. Öyle korka korka geçiyordum kenarından. Hani nefret genel olarak. O zaman korku ve nefret karıştıktı. Şu an korku yok, sadece nefret var. Nefreti de aşacağımı sanmıyorum. Zaten nefreti nasıl aşabilirsin ki?. O zamanlardan nasıl bahsedeyim bilmem ki? Hastaneye gidiyorduk, hastanede bile gaz yiyorduk. Ayağının dibine atıyolardı. Dışarı çıkamıyorsun bazen. 1 Mayıs'larda mesela, ben hiçbir 1 Mayıs'da dışarı çıkamadım şu ana kadar.<sup>69</sup>

In her another account, the police resembles what she is disturbed in her life. In the previous chapter, she told her gendered problems in her family, especially with her father. She represents in the figure of the police with an incident.

Benim lezbiyen bir arkadaşım var. Gezi protestolarına gitmişti. Şunu anlattı bana. Orada eylemdeydik polisin biri elinde cop dövüyor göstericileri. Ondan sonra tutup copunu okşuyor. Yaptığı işten zevk alıyor. Ne bekleyebilirsin ki? Çocukluğumda da sevmedim hâlâ da sevmiyorum. Gördüğüm şeylerden dolayı bana bunları yaşattılar. Bana küçüklüğümden beri bir travma yaşattılar.<sup>70</sup>

The presence of police exacerbates the precarity of youth in Okmeydanı. It becomes both the subject of fear and object of rage. State power thus becomes materialized in violent attacks of police. The police becomes embodied as the reason of vulnerabilities in youth imaginery. It also creates a kind of collectivity based on violence and struggle. Yeşim tells her violent clashed with the police in her political struggle. When I asked her what kind of possibilities political struggle offer to her, she frames the political in terms of becoming “visible”.

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<sup>69</sup>At that time, I could not walk near the police. I used to stare at weapons they carried. I used to pass by the police faintheartedly. There is a rage in general. At that time, it is a mix of rage and fear. Now there is only rage left. I do not think I cannot exceed this rage. How can you exceed it anyway? What else do I say about this time? Even when we went to hospital, we were being exposed to tear gasses. They throw them to the feet of you. Even we could not go outside. For instance, in May 1 celebrations, I have not ever gone outside up to now.

<sup>70</sup>I have a lesbian friend. She attended to the Gezi protest. She told me an incident. She says when we we are at the protest, a police officer hit protestors with his police baton. And then, he had started to caress his baton. He enjoys what he is doing. What can be expected from them? I did not like them in my childhood, and also now. I suffered from what I saw from their actions. Since my childhood, they have made me experience such a trauma.

T : Peki bir siyasi mücadele arama ihtiyacı neden duydun? Bu mücadelede, kendi geleceğin ile ilgili bir şeyler yapma isteği var mıydı?

Y : Geleceğimle ilgili yani neden böyle oluyor sorusuna şey yapmak için. Hani insan bir işi öğrendikten sonra daha iyi yorumlayabilir ya, neden böyle oluyor, bu sistem nereye gidecek. Bu insanlar neden dışarda? Ne yapmaya çalışıyorlar? Hani bu insanların düşündüklerini, ideolojilerini araştırdım.

T : Peki ne gibi sonuçlara ulaştın?

Y : Haksızlık ve zulüm. Hani devletin sürekli kafalarına vurup vurup susturmaya çalışması. Yüzüne maske takmadan önce toplumda görünmez olan insanlar, yüzüne maske taktıkları zaman sonra görünür hale geliyorlar. Onlar da bu şekilde kendilerini göstermeye çalışıyorlar. Bu şekle getirmesin insanları o zaman. Dinlesinler o zaman bu insanların sıkıntıları ne. Bunlar neden sokakta? Siz bu insanlara neden şiddet uyguluyorsunuz? Neden böyle bir politika izliyorsunuz ?

T : Sen de kendini böyle görünmez hissediyor muydun ?

Y: Hissediyordum.

T : Ne demek bu?

Y: Görünmez olmak cinsel açıdan ya da mezhepsel kimlik açısından. Hani alevi insanlar kendini saklarya, o şekilde görünmez olmak, onlardan biri gibi davranırsın. Bazıları asimile olmuştur, sen hala onun yanında bir şeyler yapmaya çalışırsın, söylemeye çalışırsın. Hani senin bir düşüncen vardır ya, sen bunu bu şekilde birine anlatsan, bir şeye ulaşamazsan, karşılığını alamazsın. Ama kapattıktan sonra yüzünü, bunu bir şekilde eyleme döktükten sonra bunu, insanlar görüyor bunu araştırma gereksinimi duyuyorlar. [...]. Hani oarda slogan atıyorsun yüzün kapalı böyle, bakıyorsun haberlerdesin, haberlere çıkıyorsun. İnsanlar görüyor.

T : Ama sen maske taktığın zaman seni sen olarak görmüyorlar bir grup eylemci olarak görüyorlar televizyonlarda?

Y: Ama sen sensin orada. Seni görüyorlar orada.

T : Peki nasıl bir his artık görünür olmak ?

Y: Artık görünür olmak güzel bir his ya... Orada çatışyorsun karşıdakine karşı. Hani başarabiliyorsun, korkmuyorsun, taş atıyorsun. Bir şeyler yapıyorsun sen orada. Görünür haldesin.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>T : Why did you search for political struggle? In this struggle, is there anything you want to do about your future?

Y : About my future, I searched for the question of why things happen that way. Since one interprets better after learning something, I asked myself why are these things happening, where will this order go? Why are these people outside, what do they try to do? I searched ideologies of these people.

T : What conclusions did you draw?

In her account, two main conclusions emerge. First, the exclusion from the society by long-term state policies and discriminations become incarnated in the figure of police. Her depersonalization with masked persona in the political struggle creates an atmosphere of social and political grievances. The invisibility emphasizes the return of the repressed in the society. Thus youth in violent clashes with the police gain an autonomous sphere to represent themselves. The invisibility in the society becomes visible in the transformed body of masked political subject. In this sense, the subjugation to collective struggle does not efface their individualities. Indeed, in this very struggle, they gain their political and personal identities. From outside, it seems to collective struggle of anonymous subjects, but for youth, in the very anonymity of collective actions, they find the ways of self-representations. For, as Yeşim says, she are *herself* there, their struggle for the formation of the self is materialized in the collective political struggle. Invisible threats of state power also become visible with encounters with the police. In this encountering, two anonymous domains, that of police and that of protestor, creates new visibilities in the imaginery of youth. State power become visible with the figure of police, and the formation of the self gains political existence in this encountering. In this mirroring relation, at the very beginning, youth form their individualities with the axis of violence/resistance and transcend their grievances in collective political representations. The subject is subordinated to the anonymous collectivization of political resistance, but in this subordination, youth do not lose their identities, but rather form and produce them in this collectivity. Allan Feldman shows what masked persona also signifies in the context of the signs of collective violence.

The mask is yet another representation of autonomous, collective violence. This recodification of the human face anticipates the construction of transindividual political agency. Through the

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Y : Injustice and oppression. I found that the state tries to suppress people, and silence them. Those who are not visible before wearing a mask become visible after masking their faces. They want to show themselves in this way. Do not urge people to this way then. Let them listen to those people, their grievances and why they are on the streets. Why are you commint violence to poeple? Why are you following such a policy?

T : Did you feel also that you were invisible in the society?

Y : Yes, I did.

T : What does it mean?

Y : Being invisible means in the sense of your sexuality or your sectarian identity. Just as Alevi people hide themselves, it is also in this way, you behave like one of them. Some became assimilated, but you still strive to do something and speak. You have a thought and you try to express this to someone. And you do not get something in return of it. But when you mask your face and put it into action, people see them and require to search it. [...] When you shout a slogan there when masked, you become appeared in the news. People start to see you.

T : But when you are masked, you are not seen as you, but one of protestors in the news?

Y : But you are yourself there, they see you.

T : What kind of feeling is to become visible?

Y : Becoming visible is a good feeling... You can clash with those against you. You can shout at them, or throw stones to them. You do something there. You are visible at that time.

signification of absence, the mask points to the metonymic circuit formed by paramilitary, gun and victim. In this circuit, political codes are transferred from one site (agent of violence) to another (the victim) in order to attain collective representation. What the mask hides is that the absent face of the agent of force is worn by the victim marked by violence. (Feldman, 1991 : 53-54)

In this manner, secondly, performativities of youth in the violent clashes reproduce state power. In every encounter, the state through the figure of police becomes material and touchable for youth in Okmeydanı. That life is altered by state violence creates the initial conditions of framing state power. Yet this framing is not done once and for all. As Judith Butler argues (1993) in the context of gender construction, performing “reiterative” acts create the basis of gender construction. “[T]he ‘I’ neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves” (ibid. 7). In Okmeydanı as well, violent clashes with the police are ritual acts in lives of youth. In this very performance in political actions, the discourse of “all-pervasive and ghostly” (Arestaga, 2005) state power reaffirms itself in the political imaginery of youth.

Therefore, the state as a powerful subject penetrates into social relations in Okmeydanı through which the discourse of political resistance gains its validity. As a result, it reconditions the relations which make young people form their subjectivities around the resistance against it in the political realm. In conclusion, the state as a powerful figure becomes tangible in ritual clashes with police forces. It becomes the object of fear to which youth represent their grievances and, into which they canalize their frustration and anger. In every act, it becomes also social conditioning through which youth form their selves in political struggle.

### **Arrestments and F-Type Prisons: Spaces of the State**

When young people engage with the political struggle in Okmeydanı, being arrest and sent into a F-Type prison construct an important part of their political future. The spaces of Okmeydanı seem a sacred space to them which is always under the attack of police forces. Their political life mainly revolves around the struggle of protecting the space against state power. On the other hand, imagined or lived experiences of F-type prisons and police stations leave important marks on their understanding of the

state. Just as the police become the embodied subjects of the state violence, those spaces are the places of the representations of the state and its brutality.

Interestingly, F-Type prisons resembles a mixture of past, present and future in narratives of youth. As I mentioned before, collective memory of political events in the past are framed around the resistance against the imprisonment in F-Type prisons. Moreover, the death fast actions which imprinted on minds of youth was activated to resist this policy of the state. It evokes both the ultimate resistance of revolutionaries and the brutal suppression of their bodies with the state violence. In the present, the image of F-Type prison also reminds many young people of the prominent possibility of imprisonment in one of those prisons due to their political struggles. Its spectral existence haunts their possibilities which many assume as their future as a result of political actions. Fined as a political prisoner, young people, which are accused of a member of an illegal political group, have been sent to F-Type prisoners. This creates a timeless image of the prison in which collective memory of death fast actions reproduce itself in experiences of youth. It becomes a material space of sovereign power, whether one was imprisoned or not. Halil remembers his imprisonment in the F-Type prison in the way that he make sense of state power and resistance against it. He remembers narratives of F-type prisons, but he reinforces his remembrance through experiences.

T : Tutuklanmak bireysel olarak nasıl etkiledi seni?

H : Onu aslında şöyle anlatayım: hapisaneye girince farkettim yaşananların ciddiyetini. Şimdi F tipine giriyorsun, bu insanlar burada nasıl yaşıyor, öncelikle bunu kafana yerleştiriyorsun. Nasıl yaşamışlar uzun yıllarca? Benim gittiğim dönemde, 20 yıllık bir tane abim vardı mahpus. F tipinden kurtulmanın tek yolunun ölüm orucu olduğunu aslında görüyorsun. O zaman hissediyorsun yani başka seçenekleri yok, buradan başka türlü kurtulamazlar, bunu başka türlü yıkamazlar. Bunu düşünüyorsun. Dışardayken hiç olur mu niye yaptılar falan diye düşüncelerim oldu, ama içeri girdikten sonra tamamen fikrim değişti yani. Dedim ki ya doğru yapmışlar. Doğru karar vermişler, çünkü başka çare yokmuş.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> T : How did it affects you personally to be imprisoned?

H : I realized the seriousness of what happened when I was put into the prison. When you enter the prison, you realize how those people live there, how have they lived for many years. At the time when I was imprisoned, there was a guy who imprisoned for 20 years. You really notice that the only way of being freed from F-type prison is death fast action. You feel at that time that there is no possibility for them. There is no way to be freed from there. You think that they cannot resist against it in any way but the death fast action. When I was outside, I was thinking that why did they do so, there must have been another way. But, after imprisonment, my thoughts totally changed. I said they made right. They decided the right thing because there was no other way.



His experience reaffirms collective memory of F-Type prisons. Yet, when he was put into Kandıra F-Type prison, at the very beginning, he could not realize what is so horrific about F-Type prisons. He tells his first feelings about the imprisonment in an ironic way. He remembers his initial feeling with the beginning of arrestment.

H : Söylediler zaten, dediler böyle böyle cinayetten alıyoruz örgüt adına tasarlayarak öldürme. Ah dedim gittik. Bir daha dedim Okmeydanı'na gidemeyeceğim ailemle görüşemeyeceğim. Bunları geçiyorsun aklında. Film şeridi gibi geçiyor.

T : Neler geçti o film şeridinden?

H : Herşey geçti. Polis sana söylüyor zaten gitti diyor, senin hayatın müebbet diyor. Korkutacak ya seni ifade alacak ya., konuşuracak seni. Bir yandan onu yaşıyorsun ama, bir yandan da taviz vermiyorsun. [...]

T : Peki o an senin psikolojin nasıldı?

H : Psikolojim bozuktuk. Düşünüyorsun işte, hapishaneyi F tipini düşünüyorsun. F tiplerini bize öyle bir anlattılar ki dışarda. Dışarıda da biliyoruz zaten, eylemlere gidiyoruz. Herkes hapishaneyi düşünüyor, tamam mı. Tekirdağ'a gidebiliriz, Edirne'ye gidebiliriz. Kandıra hiç aklımızın ucundan geçmiyor. Daha önce yatmış bir abi var yanımızda biliyor, hapishaneleri bize anlatıyor. Dövüyorlar işkence yapıyorlar falan. Biliyorsun, okuyorsun zaten, eylemlere falan gidiyorsun işkence yapılmış. Haliyle bir tedirginlik var. Birbirimize diyoruz ki üstümüzü sağlam giyinelim. Ama metrise girerken hiç öyle olmadı. Engin çeber şehit düştüğü için orada işkenceden, bir girdik hoşgeldiniz falan böyle. Biz ne yapacağımızı şaşırdık, abi de şaşırdı. Lan dedik böyle olduğunu bilmiyorduk hapishanenin. Metris'te engin çeber den kaynaklı, böyle hassaslaşmışlar. İşkence falan yapmıyorlardı artık. F tipini de öyle anlatıyor abi, "F tipi başka diyor burada böyle oldu ama", diyor, "orayı hiç böyle aklınızdan geçirmeyin" diyor. Kesinlikle girişte gardiyandan dayak yiyeceksiniz, sonra gelecek asker dövecek. Girdik F tipine sırayla üç kişi birden 9 kişilik gruptuk o zaman. Yine orada da "hoşgeldiniz beyler, buyrun beyefendi şöyle geçin" falan. Böyle konuşuyorlar, asker gardiyan hepsi. Biz birbirimize bakıyoruz böyle hani dayak yok mu dövmeyecekler mi? Biri dokunsa sen de yapıştırıcaksın. Çatara patara birbirimize gireceğiz orada. Abi dedik ne oldu? Dedi vallahi ben de bilmiyorum, çok şaşırdım dedi. Korsakoff hastası, unutuyor kimi şeyleri. Öyle oldu sonra bizi soyunma kabinlerine aldılar. İşte çıkaracak mısın dedi yok dedim çıkarmayacağım üstümü. Onlar seni zorla sayacaklar ya, onu bekliyoruz. Dedi işte bir şey yapmayacağız dedi, bize de zorluk çıkarmayın dedi. Kazağını şöyle yap dedi tamam dedi. Ben de şöyle yaptım indirdim. Tamam dedi bir şey yapmıyoruz daha dedi. Kimi arkadaşlarımıza öyle yapmadılar mesela. Seslerini duyuyorduk yanda.

T : Peki ilk girdiğinde neler hissettin?

H : Ya şimdi F tipine girdiğinde şöyle şey bekliyorsun, yerin altında küçük bir yer böyle. Küçük zaten de, ama daha küçük bekliyorsun. Koridorlardan geçiyorsun, ellerinde battaniyeler, hep filmlerde görürsün ya. Aynı şeyi yaşıyorsun. 3 kişi böyle gidiyor senle, gardiyanın biri önde, biri arkada, biri yanında. Kafanı kaldırmadan gidiyorsun, ilk dönemler öyleydi. Biz işte gittiğimizde 2009'da, kapıları açıyordu, böyle çatır çutur. Bir sürü kapıdan giriyorsun. Hücrenin içine giriyorsun. İki katlı, dubleks. Şaşırdım Allah Allah dedim yere bak ne güzel dedim. Üst kat yatak odası, alt kat mutfak tuvalet. Havalandırmaya buradan gidiyorsun. Küçük diyorsun ama geniş şimdi baktığımda. Ama sonra sonra farkına varıyorsun tabi. Ya diyorsun burada yaşanır televizyon olduktan. Sıkıntı yok yemeğin de geliyor zaten. İlk gün gittik zaten bize güzel yemek geldi. Allah allah dedik bakacaklar herhalde bize. İyi dedik valla. Tabi sonra sonra farkına varıyorsun, buranın ne kadar kötü bir yer olduğunu.<sup>73</sup>

Cemal also remembers his initial feelings at his imprisonment in the same manner.

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<sup>73</sup> H : I was told that you were accused of committing a murder on behalf of the political group(DHKP-C). I said myself that I am finished. I said I could not return to Okmeydanı, I could not meet with my family. You think this kind of things. My life flashed before my eyes.

T : What kind of things did flash?

H : Everything flashed. The police already says that your life is finished and your life is now life imprisonment. Because they try to frighten you to confess. While you were experiencing this, at the same time, you did not compromise. [...]

T : How was your feeling at that time?

H : My mood was so terrible. You think the prison, that is, F-Type. F-Types were told us so badly... We also know because we were going to the protests. Everyone was thinking of the prison. We could be sent to Tekirdağ or Edirne. Kandıra F-Type was not our mind. There was a guy with us who was telling us about prisons. He said they beat and torture. Since you know, read and go to the protests, there were indeed examples of torture. So, there was, of course an uneasiness. We told each other to overdress. However, when we were first sent to Metris prison, things like that did not happen. They were cautious because of the killing of Engin Çeber tortured to die. They were not torturing anymore, because he had yet become martyred. That guy also told us F-Type prisons: he said that "F-type prison is different, here ended like this but do not image F-Type like that. First, you will be beaten by prison guards, and then you will be also by soldiers". We entered the F-type prison in threes out of nine people. We were told again something like that "Welcome gentlemens, please sir to this way". Soldiers and guards talked to us in this way. We looked each other. There must have been beatings, right. Would they beat us? We were waiting, if someone touched us, we would respond. We would fight with each other. We asked the guy what happened now? He said "I also do not know, I am suprised as well". He was also suffering from Korsakoff disease, forgetting things. It happened that way. We were sent to changing room. They said us to undress, and we said we would not. We were waiting that they would urge us to do. They said "do not raise difficulties, show only beneath your sweaters", after showing them, said "that's enough". But it did not happen to our friend in the same way. We heard their voices. [...]

T : What did you feel at your entrance to the prison?

H : Well, when you enter the F-type, you will be expecting a place which is below ground and very small. It is really small, but you are expecting much smaller. You are walking along the corridors with blanket on your hands, as you see in the movies. You experience the same thing. Three guys walk with you, one in front of you, one near you, and one besides you. You could not raise your head at initial times. When we entered in 2009, there were many doors you should pass. And then, you are sent into the cell. I was suprised because the cell was dublex, I mean it was a two-floor space. I said it was a such lovely place. The upstairs was bedroom, the ground floor was kitchen and toilet. You could enter open space through this floor. It was enough space. But you would realize it later. At first glance, it seemed to be lived here when there was a television. There would not be any problem. Your food would also be ready. In the first day, they offered a very delicious meat to us. We said ourselves that they would probably take care of us. That was good, but we realized later how such a bad place it is.

İlk girdiğinde F tipinin çok kötü olmadığını düşünüyorsun. Çünkü F tipini, küçük kutu gibi bir yer düşünüyorsun, parmaklık halinde açlık, grevindeki hücreler gibi. Kafamda böyle canlandırdım. Ama bir girdim kocaman yer, iki katlı, bahçesi kocaman. Ama 3-4 ay kaldıktan sonra anladık ne olduğunu.<sup>74</sup>

What Halil and Cemal realized after imprisonment is isolated conditions of F-Type prisons. Political prisoners could only communicate with two other people in the same cell. The whole life of political prisoners occur in the two-storey cells, which Halil and Cemal thought as livable spaces at first. Yet, later, what they experience is the ultimate isolation of political subjects from each other. For many like Halil and Cemal, life is organized around interactions with political groups, and this isolation makes them feel vulnerability of their mere existence against state power. Exposing to the state power in the ritual conditions of state power, F-Type prisons become the space of the ultimate state sovereign which attempts to transform political subjects into apolitical bodies. In lived experiences of political subjects in Okmeydanı, F-Type prisons become the incarnation of judicial state violence.

Here, it is important to emphasize that young people in Okmeydanı oscillates between judicial and extra-judicial implementations of state power. Thus, it is useful to borrow the concept of Agamben's state of exception in the sense that life in Okmeydanı includes indeed disposable bodies, or the arbitrary decision over life and death in the domain of state power. On the other hand, it does not mean that there is not any brutal force of the state in judicial domain. In this sense, Joshua Comaroff (2007) criticizes Agamben's theory in terms of the absence of historical specificity of conditions in his formulation. He argues that "[...] fundamentally distinct juridico-historical contexts [Roman law, Nazi Germany and contemporary politics] are presumed to make a generalized case for exception because aspects of their excesses look similar to one another. [...] Agamben elides such mundanities with the most spectacular of instances, regardless of the specificities of difference. In the timeless vacuum of homo sacer, the eternal truth of sovereignty is a brutal of the political life of the populace" (ibid. 384). He elaborates that "there is tyranny enough under the law. Its suspension is hardly required for repressive acts to occur [...](ibid. 385)". Indeed, the judicial power of the state is very present in Okmeydanı through the law. In 2014, new internal security law

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<sup>74</sup>When you were first put into the F-Type prison, you did not think it was such a bad place. Because, you first felt it was very tiny, like the cells barred in hunger strike actions. I first imagined it in my mind like that. But, when I entered the prison, it was so big and two storey with a huge court. After three-four months, we realized how this place is.

started to be enacted by the AKP government to authorize the police to detain anyone on the street<sup>75</sup>. It give the right to arrest those who masked their faces without initial inquiry. This kind of the law is an attempt to frame the state power within judicial procedures. In this act, the state does not need the suspension of the law, because the law give necessary tools to state instutions to enact its power within the judiciary. So, Comaroff is so right then that to assume the state of exception as sole condition of state sovereignty carries the risk of drawing superficial conclusions. When I talked with two sisters about arrestments and protests of masked people, the elder sister, Hale (16) said her desire to participate into protests. At the same thime, the little one, Rojda (14) warned her sister not take a mask. She said that “do not wear a mask on your face, you could be punished for 20 years. It is always said in the news”<sup>76</sup>. Thus, the judicial power of the state always exists as a threatening force against local people.

However, what I emphasize here is an either-or option for implentation of state power. What I mean is that there is a convergence of legal and extra-legal presence of the state. In the spaces of Okmeydanı and collective memory of local people, the state of exception through the suspension of law is enacted with tortures, killings on the street, mutilated bodies. There are many instances remembered in the space, such as disappearances, in which state power restore its power through the suspension of the law. Take the instance of Korsakoff sufferers. Without any legal framework, the state intervned forcibly in bodies in death fast actions, leaving the damage of permanent memory erasure on subjects. Most of them could not remember of even their beings. In this very extra-legal condition, the state power embodies itself in a way of it sovereignty over bodies.

In this sense, young people could imagine the repressive state power in their lives in different manners, both legal and extra-legal. In the juridical level, arrestments are the key element of legal power of the state. Cemal narrates his arrestment when the police came directly to his home. He was accused for committing murder on the behalf of a political party. He was imprisoned for 5 years and released in 2014 due to long-term imprisonment. His trial is still contuning with the request of heavy imprisonment for life.

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<sup>75</sup> [http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa\\_new-internal-security-law-lets-police-detain-anyone-for-indefinite-period\\_371176.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_new-internal-security-law-lets-police-detain-anyone-for-indefinite-period_371176.html)

<sup>76</sup> Yüzünü kapatma sakın, 20 yıl ceza alırsın. Haberlerde hep söylüyorlar.

Direk eve geldiler zaten. Hayırdır dedim niye geldiniz. İçeri girdiler yere yatırdılar beni silahla, aradılar, sonra kaldırdılar. Hayırdır niye geldiniz. Dur dedi “annen duymasın” dedi şöyle dosyayı açtı. Gözaltı gerekçesini şey yaptı. Baktım adam öldürmek yazıyor. Direk anladım ve direk yıkıldım. Çünkü bu dosyayla, adam öldürmekten tutuklanırsan, bile ceza almasan bile, mutlaka üç beş sene kalırsın. Biz kesin ceza alırdık. Kafamda daha o an belli oldu. [...]Evime polisler geldiği anda, ben umudumu yitirdim yani daha dosyanın içeriğini bilmiyorum. Eve geldikleri anda uzun süre hapisanede kalacağıma karar verdim. Müebbet olur ya da olmaz.<sup>77</sup>

Even he tried to provide his alibi for the actual time of killing, he and his friends were arrested as usual suspects by the police. Thus he *knew* that there would be no hope in the judicial process. Growing up in Okmeydanı gives the knowledge of injustice in legal-judicial system to young people. For Cemal, being a suspect is equivalent to imprisonment for a long time. Indeed, there are many stories of long imprisonment in Okmeydanı. Even they have not been accused on a certain evidence, he thinks they will be punished for life imprisonment. In the prison, he was married, and he had plans to construct a life with her wife after he was released. But, he could not envisage a permanent possibility of future so far. Subjection once to legal/judicial system seems to the permanent suspension of life.

C : Eşikte olduğumu düşünüyorum şu an. Ceza alacağız muhtemelen de, daha uzun sürebilir süreç.

T : Ceza almaktan kasıt ne peki? Uzun süre mi?

C : Tabi tabi müebbet.

T : peki bunu nasıl yaşıyorsun?

C : Alıştık zaten . Ama düzenli bir hayata geçemiyorsun bir türlü. Evlendim ev kurayım dedim. Şimdi ailemle birlikte yaşıyoruz. Eşya alayım falan bir de işe gideriz vesaire, sonra diyorum bir tutuklanırsak biz o arada, ceza çıksa, bütün borçlar kızım üstüne kalacak, nasıl olacak? Düzen kuramıyoruz şu anda böyle eşikte bekliyoruz. [...]Belirsizlik. Genel olarak o, bişey yapamıyorum. Tarif etmek de zor. Bir şey yapamıyorum, bir şey yapsam mesela işe girsem bir düzen kursam, işe girdim iş kolay ama, arkası ne olacak? Hep böyle boynunda ipele geziyorsun. Altındaki sandalye tekme atacak biri

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<sup>77</sup> They came directly to my house. I said why did you come here. They entered inside. They searched me with their guns in a prostrate position. I asked again why you are here. They said “do not let your mom hear” and opened my file. I looked the reason of arrestment. It was committing a murder. I realized at that moment, and I became demoralized. Because with this file, even we would not be punished for committing murder, we would have to stay in prison for 3-5 years. We would be punished certainly. It conjured up in my mind immediately. [...] As soon as they came to home, I lost my hope even I had not known the content of arrestment. When they came, I already knew I would be in the prison for a long time, whether life imprisonment or not.

diye bekliyorsun. [...]Atamıyorsun çünkü onu gerilere, hayatının geri kalanını etkileyecek çünkü..<sup>78</sup>

Under the shadow of the possible danger of arrestment and imprisonment in political life, young people experience another frustration of not being able to imagine a future. “Uncertainty” is the main word which politicized young people use to describe their own conditions. Possibilities of political realms are not experienced as a way of transcending vulnerabilities, but they possibly engender new vulnerabilities in lives of youth due to the threatening force of state power embodied both in the police and legal systems. Inherited precarious conditions due to social, political and economic reasons are worsening with engagement with political projects in Okmeydanı. What they achieve through street demonstrations is not the possibility of future, but the manifestation of their grievances in their lives. The absence of a possibility of future still continues in the political realm. In political actions of youth to achieve freedom, and get rid of their precarities, their lives are again entrapped in frustrations and desperations of political struggle with arrestments, imprisonments, and even being killed by police bullets. So, a question emerges here. Why do youth engage with a political project to express their grievances under the condition that marginal political struggle continues to maintain the effacement of a future? Why are young people in Okmeydanı attracted by a kind of what Berlant calls “cruel optimism” (2011: 1) in which “something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing” (ibid.)?

Deniz Yonucu states in her comparative analysis of two working-class neighbourhoods in contemporary Istanbul that desire and rage of youth express themselves in public space through both political demonstrations and self-representations of youth as members of middle class as a consequence of “the absence of an imagination of future” (2011). She elaborates that “[w]hile such intense injustice reproduces the desire to abolish this injustice more strongly, the expression of the revolt against this injustice with sudden acts of resistance serves to increase youth population

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<sup>78</sup>C : I think I am now on the threshold. We will be punished definitely, but the process could be more long than expected.

T : What do you mean of being punished? Could it be long-time imprisonment?

C : Yes, of course, life imprisonment.

T : How do you live with that?

C : We get used to that. But you cannot start a regular life. After I was married, I thought we would have a house. Now we are living with my family. I think sometimes to buy furniture and get a job, but then, if I will be arrested, or punished in the trial, the whole responsibility will be incumbent upon my wife. We could not get organized now, we are standing on the threshold. [...] Uncertainty. I could not do anything generally. It is hard to explain. If I start a job, and I get plans, these are easy, but what will be the next? You are living with a rope on your neck. You are waiting for one who will kick the chair besides you. [...] You could not leave it aside in your life, because it will affect the rest of your life.

in prisons. While capitalism does not offer any promises for the future for working class youth, the inexistence of an organized working class movement prompts the fear of being futureless to grow even deeper” (ibid. 9). Yet it seems to me that political demonstrations and violent clashes with the police are not mere displays of their rage and frustration. I agree with the idea that youth in Okmeydanı are offered political projects to sustain their lives and there are indeed historical experiences of political life in Okmeydanı, which I described throughout the thesis. Yet I argue that the questions of why do youth consider violent political projects as their mere struggle, and how political resistance against the state with counter-violence enters the mind of youth, remain unanswered. Why, in Okmeydanı, does violence seem to youth as the powerful way of resisting injustice and failures in their lives? Whether in organized, or non-organized political struggle, why is violence associated with political struggle in the imagination of youth? This is my concern which I discuss in the next section.

### **The State Violence and Violence of Youth**

In this section, I will discuss how youth perceive violence in their political actions to transcend their problems in their lives. Violence becomes the way of construction a coherent self for many young people. As I discussed in previous sections, life is marked at the very beginning by state violence. Violence is transferred into the imagination of youth with collective memory, affective transmissions in the idiom of *bedel*, and personal experiences of violence. I have attempted to describe roots of the embodiment of violence. Yet, the roots of violence creates a new symbolic language in the space in which again counter-violence is utilized by many young people. In this sense, first, I will discuss how youth give meanings to violence they activate in their struggle, and how violence become a mythical and transcendent tool to deal with injustices they have experiences in their lives. Then, secondly, I will think about the paradox of resistance which later entraps them into hegemonic domain of state power. Violence they express themselves, through which they communicate with the society becomes both the formation of subjects and, at the same time, the subjugation to state power again.

## **From the Peaceful Image of Hacı Bektaş Veli's Lion and Antelope to the Sword of Hz. Ali, Zulfiqar**

Alevi youth in Okmeydanı differ from previous generations in the way of interiorizing violence as way of struggle. Many young people in Okmeydanı reframe Alevi identity, associating to the mythical past of resistance. Youth mobilized by socialist political groups does not experience Alevi identity in terms of peaceful and pacifist ways. This different interpretation emphasizes the main rupture of youth from their families and older experiences of Alevi identity. Thus, Alevi identity is not fixed, and does not include stable meanings, but under the shadow of violence, youth reconstruct the past of Alevi history in their political imaginations.

Alevi identity has become the problematic place of the history of both Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. In the history of Ottoman History, Alevi people witnessed many massacres, and the important Alevi figures became rebellious subjects against the rule of Ottoman Empire, one of these prominent figures, Pir Sultan Abdal, who was a Turkish-Alevi poet, wrote about resistance, love and peace, was hung due to his rebellious activities. It has become framed as a dissident identity against the dominant Sunni ideology. Massacres of Alevi people and discriminations against them also continued in the Republic of Turkey. Although the foundation of the Republic of Turkey coincided with the secularism project, the dominant Sunni ideology of the Republic has lied behind state discourses and policies in covert and overt manners. Since migration of Alevi people to city centers in the 1970s, bloody massacres came to urban space. Between 1978 and 1980, in the settings of political polarization in Turkey, Alevi people experienced massacres of Sunni-neo-fascist groups in Maraş, Çorum and Sivas. In these massacres, the main state place was to ignore reasons and the background of bloody killings, and to say the least, the state overlooked the events and condone the groups involved in the massacres. After the Sivas massacre in the 1993, Gazi Quarter riots, Gazi Quarter riots in 1995 became another most visible event of brutal state violence Alevi experienced. With this event, Alevi neighbourhoods came to be marked in Istanbul. From then, Alevi neighbourhood has been considered violent-ridden rebellious districts in Istanbul by state and media discourses.

My concern here is to delineate how youth in Okmeydanı reconstruct Alevi identity in their minds in the context of violence and resistance. Violence *precedes* the



formation of youth subjectivities in Okmeydanı. They are born to state violence and police surveillance. Yet, they also witness counter-violence of political groups against the state power. Violence exists everywhere. Political youth does not only objects to state violence, but also subjects of counter violence. Violence is language of communication of youth, but also a framework which they construct the self. In this very atmosphere of violence which pervades in inner lives of youth, it, therefore, becomes the tool through which they reframe history and identity. Alevi identity in the imagination of older generations equals mainly to peaceful and pacifist actions to construct their identities. But, I argue that, young Alevi subjects search for violence and resistance in the history of Alevism to make sense of utilization of violence. Gökhan, as a Alevi male, perceive violence-ridden resistance as a way of protecting his identity. He inherited memory of violent experiences his family witnessed. Yet, he differs from his family in terms of violent struggle.

Alevi katliamlarını sormuştum mesela artık aileme, Sivas'ı öğrendiğimde, Maraş'ı öğrendiğimde, Çorum'u öğrendiğimde. Hatta daha çok kibirli bir şekilde sordum: biz sesimizi niye çıkarmıyoruz diye? Ne yapıyoruz biz ya? Vuruluyoruz, yakalıyoruz, kafamız kesiliyor, katliam yapılıyor. Biz neden razı oluyoruz herşeye? Neden sesimizi çıkarmıyoruz? Tek verdikleri cevap şu: “Biz onlar gibi değiliz çünkü. Yapan onlar, Alevilik kültüründe bu yoktur, sevgidir”. Hiçbir zaman intikam duygusu veya kötü bir duygu beslenmiyorlar. Ben mesela o sebepten dolayı alevilere biraz da tepkiliyimdir. Eleştirdiğim yanı şudur: bu sebepten biz yapmayız”. Çünkü şöyle bir yapmadıkça, daha fazlasını göreceğiz. Tamam ben demiyorum ki alalım kafalarını keselim, dövelim öldürelim demiyorum. Ama bizim sesimizi çıkarmamız lazım, bizi de bir görmeleri lazım. Çünkü o adamlar bizi bugün rahatlıkla yok edebiliyor. Neden sesiniz çıkmıyor? Öldürüyorlar yani çıkmıyor sesin. Mesela Uğur Kurt'un cenazesinde, Aleviler şu açıklamayı yaptılar: biz yapmayız, onlar yapsın biz yapmayız. Halen var yani o duygu var içlerinde. Aleviler hep der, biz sevgi dinimiz, dinimiz sevgiden geçer. Bu böyle bir şey.<sup>79</sup>

Although he acknowledge peaceful aspects of Alevism, he wants to put his anger and fear into action on the streets.

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<sup>79</sup>I asked my family about Alevi massacres when I learned things about Sivas and Çorum massacres. I asked once in an arrogant manner, why do we clamour? What do we do? We are being shot, burned, our head are being decapitated, we are being slaughtered. Why do we come to aggre those things silently? Why could not we clamour? The only answer they gave is that “we are not like them. They did, but in Alevi culture, there is nothing like that. It is love in Alevi culture”. My family do not have any desire for revenge, or a bad feeling. So, I am also anger with Alevi people. That “we don't do things like that” is what I criticize. Because as long as we don't do anything, we will experience more than these things. I do not mean that we should behead them, or beat and kill them. But our voices should be expressed, we should be also seen. Those guys could destroy us easily, why? Because we don't express our voices. They are killing us, we are not doing anything. For instance, at the funeral of Uğur Kurt, Alevi people stated that they do whatever, we don't do things like that. This feeling is still inside them. Alevi always say our religion comes from love. That is a kind of thing.

G : Hiçbir zaman kötü bir şey yapmak istemedim, kinci olmadım intikamcı olmadım. Onu tamamen aleviliğin içinden aldım mesela. Ama her zaman aleviliğin sokakta savunulacak bir şey olduğunu, veya bir savunma gücünün olması gerektiğini düşündüm. Mesela gerçekten biri katliam yapıyorsa, bunu engelleyecek bir gücümüz olmalı. Gazi katliamı'nda olduğu gibi, insanlar bir cevap verirdi en azından. Aleviler sokağa döküldü. Neden devlet geri attı mesela? Bu bir gücün olduğunu gösterir. Orda da sivas katliamı'nda olduğu gibi olsaydı mesela, gazi'de hiç kimse sesini çıkarmasaydı, hiç kimse sokağa çıkmasaydı, belki daha çok insan ölecekti. Oradaki insanların toplanması, yeter artık deme, katliama karşı bir tepkiye girmesi, devletin geri çekilmesine sebep oldu. Korktu yani ürktü. İnsanlar sokağa çıkıyor artık dedi, Aleviler sesini çıkartabiliyor dedi. Bugün de olduğu gibi mesela; Gazi mahallesi'nde Alevi gençlerin artık sesini çıkarması gibi, Okmeydanı'nda artık Alevi gençlerin sesini çıkarması gibi bir şeydir. Yıllardan beri bastırılmış bir şeyin, güç tarafında empoze edilmeye çalışılmış bir şeyin artık patlaması. İnsanlar, yeter artık diye biliyor, aleviler artık yavaş yavaş yeter artık diyebiliyor. Sürekli Alevilerin ölmesi Berkin Elvan'ın ölmesi, Ali Ismail Korkmaz'ın ölmesi, Ahmet Atakan ve birçok insan, hep alevilerin ölmesi artık insanları şey yapıyor. yani acı çekiyorlar fotoğraflarını gördüklerinde. [...] Artık aleviler bir tepki göstermeye başladı. Sokağa çıkmak zorunda hissediyorlar kendini.

T : Sen sokağı kendini savunmanın bir yolu olarak görüyor musun o zaman?

G : Tabiki. Evde oturarak bir şey kazanamayız. Evde oturarak ölürüz ancak. Haberleri izleri televizyonda . Küfür ederiz. Lanet olsun size deriz yeter artık yezitler deriz. Ama bu yetmez. Onlar duymuyor çünkü bizi, biz sadece kendi ailemiz içersinde, onlara kin kusuyor gibi oluruz. Lanet edersin. Bu kadar yani, daha fazlası olmaz. Ama sokağa çıkarak birşeyler gösterebilirsin. Ne kadar sinirli olduğunu, artık ne kadar gücünün olduğunu gösterebilirsin. Onlara karşı artık bir tepkin lduğunu, sinirli olduğunu gösterebilirsin.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>G : All my life, I have not wanted to do a bad thing. I haven't been revenger or vindictive. I have taken these features from inside Alevism. Yet, I always argue that Alevism should be defended on the streets, or it should have a defence force. For instance, if a massacre is being done, we have a force to resist it. In the Gazi massacre, people responded at least. Alevi people took to the streets. Why did the state retreat? It shows you have a power. There, like the Sivas massacre, if no one resisted on the streets, maybe more people would die. Gathering of people, saying enough and having reacted to the massacre, caused the retreat of the state. It was afraid that people could take to the streets and Alevis could express themselves. Now, in neighbourhoods like Gazi and Okmeydanı, it is also an expression of voices of young people. It is the blowup of a repressed thing which power has imposed upon us for years. People could now say enough. Since many Alevi people is being killed, like Berkin Elvan, Ali Ismail Korkmaz, Ahmet Atakan, and many as such, people now suffer from seeing pictures of those guys. [...] Now, Alevis started to react. They feel obliged to take to the streets.

T : Do you feel the streets as a way of defending yourself then?

G : Yes, of course. Staying at home, we could not achieve anything. Staying at home, we just die. We can watch the news in television, we can curse them. We say "God damn it", or "enough already, you Yezits". But it is not enough because they do not hear us. We just feel rage towards them in our families. We can damn it and say that "it's a bit much!". There is nothing else. Yet, taking to the streets, you can express something. You can express how angry you are and how much power you have against them. You can now express that you have a reaction and you are angry at them.

In his account, collective history of Alevi massacres is reappropriated by himself. When he says “we are being shot, burned, our heads are being decapitated, we are being slaughtered”, he embodies collective memory of violence in his life in the present. On the other hand, this shows also present fears and angers which he experiences. Collective memory of brutal events coincides with his present conditions in Okmeydanı. The past is interlinked to the present to make sense of his experiences. Indeed, the shadow of violence is not only a thing of the past. Since the 2000s, Okmeydanı has been marked as a rebellious district, violence and discrimination is reproduced in the present. His remembrance of past events is combined with the killing of young people, such as Berkin Elvan in Okmeydanı. The present conditions urge him to reframe also the past events. The vulnerability in the present calls for a new violent struggle to defend himself. For him, “to stay at home” means the embracement of killing passively. Thus, violent struggle seems to him as a way of dealing with those problems. The presence of violence and counter-violence frames social conditioning from which young people derive new meanings in their lives. Violence is a thing to which they are exposed, but also is a framework in which the formation of subjectivities flourishes. Life starts with violence of state violence, and it is this violence very through which they try to possess their identities and spaces.

In previous sections, Sinan also acknowledges glorified violent struggle in his life as the idiom of *bedel*. According to him, violence against the state is what constitutes fundamentals of the space. For him, sacrifices of revolutionaries in violent resistances are that which sticks him to political struggle in the frame of violence. He also redefines his Alevi identity within the context of violent struggle. Counter-violence of political groups gives him the way of constructing the self, but also he finds mythical roots of violence and resistance in his redefinition of Alevi history different from his family. In his accounts, he usually emphasizes the relationship between his Alevi identity and his political struggle.

T :Politik mücadelede, alevi kimliğin ile ilgili neler hissediyorsun?

S : Mesela beni çok etkileyen nedir. Hazreti Ali şunu diyor: mazlumların öç alma günü zalimin zulmettiği günden beter olacak diyor. Zülfikar bizim için çok kutsaldır, Hazreti Ali'nin kılıcı. Kimi Aleviler'e göre, Aleviler kin tutmaz, biz barışçılız derler. Bu Aleviler'in tarihine aykırı bir şey. Çünkü Hazreti İmam Ali mazlumların hakkını aramış, öç almış. Zülfikar adalet olmuş. Bugün

de baktığımda zülfikarın cephelilerde. Cephelerin elindeki hazreti ali'nin zülfikarı. Adalet, yani, mazlumların öcünü almak.

T : O zaman, kullanacağın şiddet senin halk kültüre dediğin şeyde mevcut, bunu mu kastediyorsun?

S : Alevilik'teki kültür biraz daha devrimcilere yakındır diyebilirim. Çünkü savaşmışlar. Hem ezilen olmuş yıllarca, hem de bir sürü ayaklanmalar yaşamışlar. Anadolu'da çok ayaklanmalar yaşanmış. Baba İshaklar Baba İlyaslar işte Anadolu tarihinde osmanlı devleti'ne karşı ayaklanmalara öncülük etmiş önderleridir. Mesela Celali isyanları vardır. Dersim'de Seyit Rıza isyanları vardır. Osmanlı Devleti'ne karşı olan isyanlardan bahsediyorum. Direnişçi yanı her zaman daha çoktur Alevilerin. Çünkü en çok onlar ezilmişlerdir. Bundan kaynaklı alevilerin direnişçi bir kültürü var. Savaşçı bir kültürü var. Bunu yok etmek istiyorlar. [...]

T : Peki Alevilik'in bu yönünü aile içinde nasıl yaşıyorsun?

S : Şimdi bizim Alevilerde son zamanlarda bir değişim var. Mesela korkudan dolayı korku kaygıdan dolayı chp'ye çok kaymışlar. Chp tutunacakları bir dal olmuş. Halbuki Chp de katliamcı bir parti. Ama ben anneme anlattığımda, benim Alevilik bakış açımı anlattığımda, bana hak veriyor. Şiddeti anlatıyorum, devrimci şiddet anlatıyorum, zülfikarı anlatıyorum. Annem hani hayır diyor şiddet yoktur diyor. Ben diyorum ki Hazreti İmam Ali'nin elindeki zülfikar oyuncak mıydı? Hayır, savaşıyordu. Zülfikarla mazlumların öcünü aldı. Zalimlere karşı savaştı. Onu anlattığım zaman hak veriyor. Biliyorlar ama işte korktuklarından dolayı daha çok barışçıl yanını ön plana çıkarıyorlar. Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli'yi daha çok ön plana çıkartıyorlar. Mesela Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli'nin aslanla ceylanın resmi vardır. Aslanla ceylan barışabilir. O zamanki isyanlardan sonra, bence Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli bunu ön plana çıkarmak istemiş. Uzlaşmacı geri bir yanı var Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli'nin. Ben de bunun doğru olmadığını söylüyorum aileme. Hazreti İmam Ali'den Pir Sultan Abdal'tan örnekler veriyorum.

T : Peki Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli'deki gibi, kendinde uzlaşmacı bir yan görüyor musun barış yapmak için?

S : Barış, ama kiminle barış? Halklar arasında bir küskünlük yok. Halklar arasında bir savaş yok. Savaş ezenler ezilenler arasında. Bu düzen halkları birbirine düşürmeye çalışıyor. Biz kiminle barış yapacağız? Bizi katledenlerle mi barışacağız bizi diri diri yakanlarla mı barışacağız? Böyle bir şey mümkün mü? Kurtla kuzu yan yana gelebilir mi? Bir tarafta insanları aç bırakan, soyup soğana çeviren, ezen, katleden her türlü aşağılamayı reva gören bir düzen var, öbür tarafta ise ezilen, aç, yoksul, fukara, hunharca katledilmiş çocukları, toplu mezarlara gömülmüş bir halk var. Biz şimdi onlarla barışabilir miyiz?<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> T : What do you feel about your Alevi identity in your political struggle?

Sinan does not frame his Alevi identity around the peaceful images of Alevi history, but rather, he searches for historical justifications for violence and resistance in it. What he means covertly by thing on hands of *Cepheliler* is guns and revolutionary violence of political groups. He associates it with the mythical image of violence and resistance, embodied in the figure of Zulfıqar. For him, violence is the only way of maintaining struggle and constructing a coherent self. Collective memory of violence, experiences and constant presence of police violence call for a counter-violent struggle in his life struggle. In this sense, many young people, like Sinan, perceives violence as the reappropriation public space for themselves (Darıcı, 2011). Moreover, it becomes a logical framework for the formation of subjectivities. Thus the axis of violence and resistance becomes dominant social force which many young people create new identities different from older generations. It, therefore, urges them to reframe collective identity of Alevism. Given failures in familial relations and frustration with the problems of educational system, ethnic and racial discriminations, class-based troubles, violence becomes a mythical and transcendent tool for youth to possess power over their beings. It provides them with heroic and immediate actions to overcome their grievances. Violence is not a mere display of their problems through violent

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S : For instance, there is something which impresses me too much. Hz. Ali says that the day the oppressed people take their revenges will become worse than the day oppressors inflict cruelty. Zulfıqar, which is the sword of Hz. Ali, is sacred for us. For some Alevi people, Alevis do not bear a grudge, and they are peaceful people. It is against our history. Because Hz. Imam Ali took the oppressed's revenge, demanded justice for them. Zulfıqar became justice. When I think today, *Cepheliler* have now Zulfıqar. What is on the hands of *Cepheliler* is Hz. Ali's Zulfıqar. Justice, I mean, is to take the oppressed's revenge.

T : So, do you mean that violence you will use exist in what you mention as people's culture?

S : I mean that culture in Alevism is more closer to that of revolutionaries. Because they (Alevis) fought. They have both become oppressed and witnessed many revolts for years. In Anatolia, they witnessed many revolts. People such as Baba İlyas and Baba İshak became important figures who leads revolts against the Ottoman Empire. For instance, there were Jelali revolts, or the revolt of Seyit Rıza in Dersim. I mean resistances against the Ottoman Empire. The aspect of resistance is always more prominent in Alevi people because they have become oppressed mostly. For this reason, Alevis have a culture of resistance and a culture of war. They want to destroy it. [...]

T : How do you experience this aspect of Alevism in your family?

S : In recent years, there is a change among Alevi people. Due to fear and anxiety, they have supported the Republican Party (CHP). CHP has become a point they have held on. However, it is also a genocidal party. When I tell my opinion about Alevism to my mother, she shares my thoughts. I tell violence to her. When I tell revolutionary violence and Zulfıqar, she says that there is no violence in it. Then, I say that what was on Hz. Ali's hand, was that a toy? No, he was fighting. He was taking the oppressed's revenge with Zulfıqar. He fought against oppressors. When I tell this, she justifies me then. They know but, since they are afraid, they bring the peaceful aspect into the forefront. They put forward Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli. For example, there is an image of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli with a lion and an antelope. It means that a lion and an antelope could make peace. I think that, after revolts in that period, he wanted to emphasize this point. There is a reconciliatory and backward aspect of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli. I tell my family this is approach is not true. I give examples from Pir Sultan Abdal and Hz. Ali to them.

T : Do not you feel a reconciliatory part in you to make peace, like Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli?

S : Peace, but with whom? There is not any resentment among peoples. There is no war among them. War is between those who are oppressed and those who oppress. This order aims to set one against another. With whom will we make peace? Do we make peace with those who have burned us alive? Is something like that possible? Do the wolf and the lamb come side by side? On one side, there is a system which makes people become hungry, oppressed, robbed and killed, and on the other side, there are those who are oppressed, hungry and poor. There are the people of whose children were slaughtered and buried in mass graves. Now, could we make peace with them?

demonstrations and clashes with the police, or not only way of being “visible”. This is one dimension of the engagement of youth with violence. Rather, violence is also a symbolic domain which young subjects give their meanings to their lives in individual realm.

Before concluding, I would like to give an example of representation of reframing Alevi identity in public space. I argue that this example shows the rupture of Alevi youth from older generations and their imagination of violent resistance. The example is from another public park, which is officially called as Dikilitaş Park which is located in very center of Okmeydanı. It is a small public space at the intersection of three streets. As I said before, public parks in Okmeydanı epitomize youth struggle for reappropriation of public space against state power, like in Sibel Yalçın Parkı. Here, there is also a bust of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as a symbol of the reproduction of Turkish state hegemony over public space (Bozdoğan, 2001). Different from Sibel Yalçın Park, however, this park is not only reframed with the figures of dead revolutionaries, but also the reframing of Alevi identity. Among local people, it is also known as Aşık Veysel Parkı, because there is also a bust of Aşık Veysel, who was an Alevi-Turkish poet and bard, an important figure in Alevi culture in terms of love of nature, peace etc. These two figures have been present in the park for many years ‘peacefully’. However, last year, the park was ‘reopened’ and renamed as Mehmet Ayvalıtış Parkı by young people and some political groups in Okmeydanı. Mehmet Ayvalıtış was an Alevi young male killed in the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul. He has become one of important figures after the Gezi park protest. As mentioned before, since young people killed in the Gezi Park protests were mainly Alevi, Alevi identity again came to the public agenda. In the context of park, young people added a graffiti of Mehmet Ayvalıtış to the park, and changed the name of the park. The historical background of Alevism has, therefore, combined with symbols of political resistance. Reframing of the park in the present fear and rage of Alevi youth met the search of youth for violence and resistance.

In this sense, in Sinan’s and Gökhan’s accounts and the reappropriation of the park, peaceful images of Alevi history do not correspond to present conditions of Alevi youth in Okmeydanı. Reconstructing Alevi history and identity, youth imbue Alevi identity with symbols of resistance and violence. It shows the engagement of youth with new ways of resistance in their lives against dominant structure of both the state and

previous generations. In this reframing, what is prominent is the desire of you for a resistance framed by violence in their political struggle.

### **The Paradox of Violence and Resistance**

Throughout the chapter, I have showed that violence is a constitutional element for the formation of subjects. Through collective memory of violence in political bodies and space, *bedel*, at the very meaning of word(cost, price), creates an existentialist frame for youth. Moreover, counter violence political groups develops against state violence is utilized by youth to redefine their agencies. On the other hand, interestingly, what this kind of violence offers to youth are heroic deaths, imprisonments and arrestments. So, why do youth engage with this kind of activity? Why do they frame their political and personal resistance around violence? Why do not many young people envisage a future beyond violent resistant? I argue that the engagement with violence, which they think a way of transcending their problems embodied in the figure of state power , becomes a domain that subjugates again them into power relations.

First of all, violence is the dominant language of state power in Okmeydanı. It is a hegemonic discourse of the state which reaffirms and restores itself in the mind of subjects. It is a “symbolic domain”, with Lacan’s term, boundaries of which power relations frame. Functioning in a different way, language of power differs from other spheres, embodied in violence. As long as youth frame their subjects around violence, they are subjugated to hegemonic language of power. Many perceive violence as a struggle against the domain of state power, but violence, at the very beginning, is framed by power. When youth express themselves, display their angers against state, and frame resistance in political violence, they are penetrated into symbolic domain of power realitons. The very point of counter violence they think that their struggle free themselves of dominant structure of state power carries the traces of power relations. Take many experiences of youth in this chapter. When they engage with a violent struggle with the police as the subject of the state, they use the language of violence, at the very beginnig, framed by state power. Power *knows*, so to speak, how to deal with political resistance of youth because it is this violence they create to subjugate them. Exclusion practices of the state does not mean that power relations are excluded from space and subject relations, nor counter violence of political groups is not affected by

the state power. To return to Agamben's argument, "[w]hat cannot be included in any way is included in the form of the exception" (1998: 24). I argue that the exception is not the suspension of law, but also new forms of state practices. Unlike regulatory practices, normalizing discourses to create "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1984), what power activates is another language of subjugation, i.e. violence. At the very violent resistance of political subjects, state power constitutes its domain over subject and space. Resistance in this form becomes an "effect" of power (Butler, 1997: 98).

Here, it is important to remind Foucault's argument about the formation of subjects and its relation with subjugation. According to Foucault, power is not an external force to possess domain over subjects, but it is what constitutes the very conditioning of the formation of subjects. Power subjugates individuals and functions *through* their bodies (Foucault, 1984). Power reproduces itself in the way that human beings include a part of it in their subjectivities. In his imprisonment metaphor, subjects are included in a prison that does not surround subjects externally, but the prison is the very formation of subject in the domain of power. He argues that, "[t]he man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the master that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body" (ibid. 177). Moreover, elaborating from Foucault, Judith Butler argues the axis of subject/subjection in her important study. Butler's account shows "the ambivalent passionate attachment to our own categorization and interpellation into the social world" (Thiranagama, 2011: 12).

What are used to thinking of power as what presses on the subject from outside, as what subordinates, sets underneath, and relegates to a low order. This is surely a fair description of part of what power does. But if, following Foucault, we understand power as *forming* the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong desire, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the beings that we are. The customary model for understanding this process goes as follows: power imposes itself on us, and, weakened by its force, we come to internalize or accept its terms. What such an account fails to note, however, is that the "we" who accept such terms are fundamentally dependent on those terms of "our" existence. [...] Subjection consists precisely in this



fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency. (Butler, 1997: 2)

Thus, our very acts around the formation of subjects includes an attachment to power relations in an “insidious” effect of power. In this manner, Sharika Thiranagama, in the context of Sri Lanka, describes war as an “external” and “internal” force, which “happened to one”, and also “happened inside one” (2011: 10). She elaborates the effect of war as social power, relating to the relation between the formation of subject and subjection, following Butler’s argument. She argues that “[t]his whole” is made possible because subjection as such confers upon us existence, and we desire to be intelligible, we desire existence as such ([Butler, 1997]: 28, 104, 129-31; 2004). Butler’s account is her redirection of (Foucauldian) subjectivification toward considering the place of (Freudian) desire, attachment, and libidinal investment in subjection toward, not, as she points out the more commonly theorized psychoanalytic “unconscious outside power,” but the “unconscious of power”(104-5) [...]” (ibid. 11). She argues that this investment and attachment make subjects “be intelligible and recognized” (12). She emphasizes the importance of war in the mind of people.

Over thirty years, this unpredictable war became a normal negotiated everyday, providing a horizon of meaning by which lives in its very brutality, it constituted multiple processes and personas and as “horizon of meaning” gave shared intelligibility to stories. (Thiranagama, 2013: 23)

Indeed, in our context, state violence becomes “a horizon of meaning” with which many life narratives start and end. The very presence of violence, witnessed by testimony, collective memory and individual experiences, constitutes the frame in which my interviewees narrate their life stories. Take the explanation of *bedel*. It is an actual force of violence as social power embodied in the formation subjects. When Sinan says “living in Okmeydanı requires a *bedel*”, it shows how violence is transferred into the formation of subjects, and how subjects “depend” their existences on social power of violence, in the affective idiom of *bedel*. Or, when Jindar says “you have this reality, you should not give up” in her remembrance of personal memory of violence experienced in her family, she shows her dependency on the frame of violence to form her story and subjectivity. In this sense, violence becomes a process without which young people fail to construct their self.

Moreover, for my argument, violence is not a framework of intelligible stories, but, also an active force which mobilizes actions of youth. Youth does not only take this frame to make sense of their lives, but also, it is also utilized further by youth to project themselves into the future. Violence is what injures them and they “oppose” against, but they “desire” for their struggle. In this act, they use the dominant language of power, i.e. violence. Violence becomes “an ambivalent attachment”, which is “injurious and yet productive and constitutive” (Thiranagama, 2013, 23). That is why many young people feel a powerful attachment to violence as a part of their individual struggles. To return to my initial argument that this violence subjugates to power relations of the state, how are they entrapped by power which they struggle against through violence-based struggle? The answer could be reached with “mimetic” relations between political groups and the state. Arextaga argues that political groups and the state gain their “mutual self-recognition” in the “intimacy of violence” (2005: 166). In violent struggles between the state and political groups, they reaffirm each other’s existence. The state, as the subject of political violence experienced by political groups, returns as the object of counter-violence. According to her, they share “the same political imaginary”. The aim of political group become its violent struggle against the state, closing up another actions. She argues in the example of ETA in radical Basques nationalism “ETA has used state violence as its main legitimizing reference point, the justification for its existence and the often cited reason for its continuity. The state is thus transformed, through a violence personified in specific and well-known people, in the phantasmal, all-powerful, and highly threatening enemy that demands the cohesion and loyalty of all Basque nationalists. [...] “[T]he state” and “terrorism” form part of the same political imaginary and their actors make up a phantasmatic relationship that links them intimately together, with each one depending on the other for their own definition and legitimacy” (Arextaga, 2005: 173-174).

In a similar way, many radical socialist groups in Okmeydanı constitutes main struggle in terms of subverting the State through violence. Returning to my argument, violence as the language of social power creates the basis of one’s space in social world into which he/she was born, but also the roots of one’s subjection into this social world. Violence as a symbolic domain is framed by the state power, but reproduced again and again by counter-violence of political youth. Ideology of political groups in Okmeydanı is reciprocated by political youth in Okmeydanı since political violence has been folded

into ongoing relationships. Thus, political groups could mobilize youth around the language of violence to construct their subjectivities. Encountering with the state violence at the beginning creates the points of the formation of the self in social world. The presence of violence in narratives, memory and experiences points out expected norms that urge youth to perform them. These norms are organized around popular representations of revolutionary violence and heroic activities for youth.

Many young people fail to think a life without violence. It forms the formation of youth subjectivities. It creates the repertoire of the past, present and future for youth. Youth obtains this kind of knowledge that life is achieved through violence as a kind of “poisonous knowledge” (Das, 2000). This “poisonous knowledge” of violence entraps them into a constant cycle of violence and resistance. Since life is framed around the codes of state violence at the very beginning, and political groups offer a language of counter violence and heroic acts, a culture of violence engenders power social scripts which are transferred into social actions. In this cycle, many young people feel entrapped into those scripts of violence. Violence is thus a constitute element of collectivities. It seems to many as only way of expressing their rage, grudge and vengeance. Thus violence penetrates into the political imagination of youth. When Cemal came to Okmeydanı, he was politicized around DHKP-C. His struggle with police made him realize that he should take more violent actions against the police.

O dönem çok fazla dayak yedik aslında. Ben o süreçte eğlenmeye gidiyordum. Ölüm oruları devam ediyordu. Birkaç ay içerisinde 8-10 defa gözaltına alındım. Daha yeni gelmiştim. İlk aylar çekingendim. Polis gözaltına alırken, ilk zamanlar polis kolumu bükerek, ben yürürdüm. Sonraları ben direnmeye başladım, yere yattım vesaire. Ama sürekli dayak yiyorduk. Her seferinde bir yerim kırılıyor. Kaburgam kırılıyor, kolum kırılıyor. [...] Biraz daha böyle öfkelenmeye başladım, daha öfkelenmeye başladım. Dergi dağıtmakla falan bu işler olmayacak. Onlar bizi dövüyorsa, bizim de onları dövme hakkımız var. Onlar gelip bizim mahallemize, pislik yapıyorsa, bizim de onları üzme veya karşılık verme hakkımız var. Savunma hakkımız var gibi şeyler düşünmeye başladım. Karşıdaki insan sana silahla ateş ediyorsa, sen karşısında yumuşak bir savunma ile karşılık veremezsin diye düşündüm. Daha iyi bir savunma olmalı. Onu düşünmeye başladım. Ve o an kararımı verdim, ben bu işi daha hızlı yapacağım, diye.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Those days, we were beaten up much. In that period, I was attending the protests. Death fast actions were still continuing. In first months, I was taken into custody for 8-10 times. I had just come here. In a few months, I was timid. When I was take into custody, the police twisted my arm and I used to just walk. Later, I started to resist them and get on the ground. But we were always beaten up. Every time, one part of my body was broken, I had rib

What he means by “fast manner” is that he decided to retaliate violently. His political struggle justified his violent actions. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, being a “revolutionary”(devrimci) is a powerful social action in youth life. Moreover, this political life is imbued with the references to violence. Zeynep also feels constant presence of political life as an option in her life. In her life she witnessed his brothers’ political struggle in Okmeydanı. One of them was imprisoned for 5 years, and the other died in the political struggle. Those experiences frame her definition of life.

T : Ailendeki politik kişiler seni nasıl etkiledi?

Z : Biz zaten hep politiktik. Ben bir tane abimi kaybettim. O da aynıydı yani. Doğduğumdan beri böyle. Babam da aynıymış gençlik yıllarında. Ben zaten onlarla büyüdüm, etkilemedi beni. Benim zaten başka bir dünyam yoktu liseye başlayana kadar. Ben lisede gördüm farklı düşünceleri. [...]

T : Peki bütün bu yaşadıkların sende bir öfke doğurdu mu? Ben de bir şeyler yapmalıyım dedin mi?

Z : Öyle bir düşüncem oldu. Ama mesela ailem için geri durdum hep. Ben de aynı yoldan gideyim diye bir düşünce oluştu ama, annem için babam için geri durdum. [...] Yani ben zaten şu an diyorum bir tane erkek arkadaşım var. Eğer ondan ayrılırsam, bu yola giderim. Başka bir dünya yok benim için.<sup>83</sup>

Violence and resistance in the political realm affect and form local structures of belonging and feelings in lives of youth. Zeynep thinks that there is only “way” she could develop her life. Thus, the dominant political structure in Okmeydanı provides a language of violence, closing of other possibilities. This language is closed one which urge youth to perform expected social actions. There is only one way in this language through which youth deal with injustices, state violence, familial problems. In this sense, violence is the first thing youth encounter in their lives, and it will be the way of achieving their freedom. It brings us to Frantz Fanon’s argument of the relationship

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fractures or my arm were broken. [...] I started to get angry more than before. I thought that that didn’t work like that, delivering journals etc. If they beat us, we have the right to beat them. If they harass in our neighbourhood, we have the right to distress them, or retaliate against them. I started to think that we have the right of defense. If those against you fire on you with a gun, you could not retaliate against them with a less hard defence. It should be a better defence. I started to think that. Then, I decided that I would do that in a fast manner.

<sup>83</sup>T : How did your political subjects in your family affect you?

Z : We have been always political. I lost one of my brothers. He was also the same. It has been like that since I was born. My father was also same in his youth. I already grew up with them, they did not affect me. After all, I have not had another world until I started high school. I saw different thoughts in high school. [...]

T : Did those experiences raise any anger in you? Did you feel obliged to do something?

Z : Yes, I had this kind of feeling. But I refrained myself for my family. I had a feeling that I should engage with this way. But I did not for my mother and father. [...] I mean, now I say myself that I have a boyfriend. If I broke up with my boyfriend, I will enter this way. There is no other world for me.

between violence of the oppressed and freedom. He argues in the colonial context that encountering of the colonized with the colonizer is at the very beginning by violent oppression of the latter (Fanon, 1965). According to him, “the native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor. The symbols of social order — the police, the bugle calls in the barracks, military parades and the waving flags — are at one and the same time inhibitory and simulating [...]”. “[V]iolence alone will free them” (ibid. 53-73). He argues that the struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor could be sustained only in the domain of violence, elaborating that “the violence of the colonial regime and the counter-violence of the native balance each other and respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity” (ibid. 88). His arguments resonates with Arextaga’s formulation of mimetic relationship between political groups and the state in Basque context. Although the question of to what extent Fanon’s idea for violence has become effective in the context of post-colonialism is beyond my thesis, and it has been also criticized widely (Arendt, 1997), what seems important to me here is that there is also a powerful relation between violence and freedom in Okmeydanı. What I attempted to describe the formation of violence in the mind of youth throughout the chapter is that many political young people percieve violence as the only way of their struggle. What seems to me problematic, returning to my initial arguments, is that engagement with violence become a social domain which subjugate young people into state power again, rather than achieving freedom.

This is through the way which, in both Foucault’s imprisonment metaphor, which forms subjects around the language of violence, and in Butler’s argument, initiate agencies. This subjection occurs not only in abstract terms, but also in material practices of state power. Young people mobilized by political groups in Okmeydanı are offered imprisonment, arrestments, and heroic deaths, that is subjection to the law and judicial force of the state, or the killing of subjects. Local conditioning of violence is thus under the domain of power relations of the state. Violence youth imagine in their struggle becomes what entraps them into the domain of the state.

If their political resistance is framed and affected by hegemonic language of the state in Okmeydanı, i.e. violence, what do they find at the end of their political struggle? I argue that political deaths and sacrificial acts become the last point of struggle to transcend the domain of state power. That brings us to the title of this chapter: “Sacrifice is justice”. It is a political graffiti, I realized, which is commemoration of

those who sacrificed themselves in the political struggle. The graffiti is located on some walls in Okmeydanı, and also a political discourse of DHKP-C which glorifies political deaths. Sacrificial acts are framed and reappropriated for the struggle of people in Okmeydanı. However, it also includes a personified act. Why do some political subjects in Okmeydanı think that sacrifice is a way of reaching transgression? It is very related to the idea that death becomes the last point of resistance at the end of political struggle. In a sacrificial act, subject does not sacrifice himself/herself for people, but also it become his/her last violent act which destroy sovereign of state power over the body. In this last act of violence on *his/her* body, it resembles the last manifestation against state power. This is his/her violent act over the body to possess sovereignty of his/her body. Moreover, this is the very last act of subject which make him/her achieve what he/she was deprived of by the state power, i.e., “justice” and “freedom”.

The axis of violence and resistance in the political life of youth ends up with the subjection to power relations of the state, as I mentioned in this section. Yet, political deaths and heroic gestures seem to free themselves from this cycle. For instance, death fast actions were those resistant acts of many political subjects in Okmeydanı to destroy the decisive right of the state over death and life (Foucault, 1984). Political subjects in and outside of the prisons started death fast actions to gain the right to live and die at the expense of destroying their bodies. It is the very resistance against the right of power “to kill”, “to allow to live” (Mbembe, 2003). In the state of exception, the state manifests itself through the suspension between death and life, depriving subjects of political existence, but on the other hand, political subjects in death fast actions relocate political existence in their subjective acts of violence. The “soul”, with Foucault’ term, through which power exercise its sovereignty over body, “imprisoning” it, and subjugating the body to power relations, could be destroyed by sacrifices of the body. There is no domain of the state over body at the time of death fast actions, because the body become the space of personal right to kill themselves to free his/her body from the domain of state power. That is why death fast actions seemed a threatening force to the State in the 2000s. It became a clear manifestation of resistance against the state through the body which is the very domain where power functions. Thus, on December 19, 2000, the state launched an operation, *Hayata Dönüş Operasyonu*, to ‘neutralize’ political resistants. The question of why the state let them die is very based on this relation between body

and sovereign power of the state, in other words, on the right to kill subjects, or let them live.

During my fieldwork , there occurred a hostage-incident on March 31, 2015 in Çağlayan Courthouse in Istanbul, which came at the top of the public agenda in Turkey. Two revolutionaries from DHKP-C, one of them who was ex-field manager in the name of DHKP-C in Okmeydanı , took the prosecutor hostage, who was examining the killing of Berkin Elvan. Their request was to disclose those who were responsible in the case of Berkin Elvan. After negotiations failed, the incident ended up with the attack of the police in the courthouse, killing two revolutionaries. The prosecutor also died in the incident, but the question of who shot him remains unanswered question. For my concern, this incident shows how deeply politicized youth perceive counter violence and sacrificial acts in search of justice. Their imagination of political struggle through violence seem a transgressive act to achieve freedom and justice. Death gains its worthiness in the sense that they find valuable meanings of life in heroic acts of death. After the incident, there were many posters of death revolutionaries hanged on the walls around Okmeydanı. In the following days after the incident, there also occurred some commemorations for two revolutionaries, and even celebrations which glorified their resistance and struggle for justice. It seems to me that this incident express that youth in Okmeydanı frame violence and how they commemorate sacrificial acts in terms of violence, resistance and power. The issue here is not the rationality of political action, but rather, how political youth give meanings to these political actions. In conclusion, violence and resistance come to the agenda of youth as powerful social force which urge them to make sense of their lives in Okmeydanı, and perform political actions in line with this discourse.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the chapter, I have discussed that violence become the main framework which both make youth narrate themselves and becomes an active force for them to form possibilities of future around the political realm in Okmeydanı. Collective memory of violence and testimony creates the basis of affective ground of political subjectivities. Political life penetrates into the very core of life in existentialist framework. Current political groups in Okmeydanı do not provide a certain political

project, but activate the struggle in the axis of violence and resistance. I have argued that this kind of struggle reproduces the conditions of the subjection to power relations. Violence as only way of the struggle creates a “poisonous knowledge” for political youth in their heroic actions. These actions entrap them into specific future possibility, rather than transgressing boundaries of power domains. Political life is situated against the powerful figure of the state. The only way youth imagine in their struggle becomes violence through which state power restores its sovereignty. Violence that youth find as the way to freedom becomes hegemonic language of the state power at the very beginning.

After the imprisonments, many revolutionary young people feel themselves estranged from the social world. They find the worsening condition of uncertainty of life. It seems to me that when young people engage with the language of violence, they are subjected to another form of power. That is, political bodies of young people could not be turned into “docile bodies” in conventional ways of power. Rather, in another form of language, i.e. political violence, state power could achieve to involve dissident young people in its domain.



## CHAPTER 4

### EVERDAY FORMS OF RESISTANCE BEYOND VIOLENCE

In this chapter, I will discuss the formation of youth subjectivities which are also exposed to state violence and vulnerabilities. My interviewees in this chapter also search of new ways to deal with problems and get rid of constraints in their lives. How they differ from political subjectivities in the previous chapter organized around violence and resistance is that they also resist the dominant local structure of violence. I have discussed that the state violence frames local meanings of life for youth, and counter violence of political groups offers a language of resistance with which many political youth engage. The axis of violence/resistance forms the future imaginations of youth, entrapping them into the cycle of violence. Collective memory of violence and witnessing to past events are rearticulated with lives of youth as a “poisonous knowledge” (Das, 2000), framing everyday struggle in the language of heroic actions. However, there are also other subjects who perform new actions to get rid of this knowledge.

I argue in this chapter that subjectivity is not a fixed place and collective events does not affect subjectivity unilaterally. Rather, it is also important that subjectivity is a powerful domain which has the power to reinterpret landscape of collectivities, negotiate local representations and articulate with different temporalities in life. Collective does not necessarily precede subjectivity, but it is an articulation of both, which opens new transformations. Kleinman and Fitz-Henry argues that “[w]hen we delineate more

clearly the porousness of the self, we shift away from notions of universal essences toward more contextual framings of moral experience, affect, and our deepest subjective process. [...] [T]he subject is always social and the social, subjective” (2007, 64). This is the place of subjective formations where we can find new forms of resistance different from dominant local cultures.

For my concern, the specificity of Okmeydanı is based on that it is located in the middle of Istanbul. It cannot be deduced that police surveillance and violent demonstrations make it an absolutely isolated place. Its spatial specificity in Istanbul makes local people open to encounters with the heterogeneity of social actions. While I discussed that many young people see Okmeydanı as a sacred place, it is not an essential condition of the space. Rather this is very related with how subjects give meanings to it. The presence of state violence shapes local structures of belonging, but at the same time, they are also reproduced by local people. Okmeydanı is not in the middle of nowhere. Nor, it is a space which only conditions of civil-war prevails, like some districts in the southern region of Turkey. It is very located at the intersection of the ways youth express themselves. The possibility of new actions in a heterogeneous environment of Istanbul provides youth with new ways out of local boundaries. I do not mean all possibilities have equal social force in the context of Okmeydanı. Indeed, local force of political presentations of youth in the axis of violence/resistance is the most affective structure of belonging and feeling for many, which I described in detail in the previous chapter. What I emphasize here is that, if we talk about an isolation or exclusion, this is also because of self-exclusion practices of youth in performing dominant and expected norms in Okmeydanı, rather than only the state power.

Berfu is a 17 years-old Kurdish-Alevi female, who has been living in Okmeydanı, since she was five. Her family migrated from Tunceli to Istanbul due to economic reasons before she was born. She has politicized subjects in her relatives, but her family is not involved with political groups, except her brother, who also attended political organizations for a while. Berfu’s encountering with political groups, however, started with voluntary music and theatre courses organized by local groups. In this way, she could meet some political young people and learn the motivations of their actions. In those encounters, she feels an estrangement from political groups. According to her, the language of many political groups is closed and inflexible in that she does not

articulate those thoughts as a search of individual freedom. Rather, it is another way of subjection to expected norms.

B : Bu kadar insan gözaltına alınıyor veya eylemlere bu kadar insan katılıyor. Ve sürekli daha birileri katılmaya başlayınca, insanların ilgisini çeken birşey oluyor. İnsanlar soruylar neden bunu yapıyorlar diye bir şekilde. Ne kadar körü körüne de bağlı olsa, insan “baksana! Bu da gitmiş” diyor. Meraktan dolayı çeken birşey oluyor.

T : Peki seni çeken bir şey olmuyor mu?

B : Niye yaptıklarını merak ediyorum. Hepsini göre farklı. Ama benim merak ettiğim asıl nokta şu: bu kadar insan bir şey yapıyor. Kimisi yazıyor kimisi resmini yapıyor, kimisi fotoğrafını çekiyor. Kimisi sadece duruyor, kafasında bir düşünce de olsa, sadece duruyor eyleme geçmiyor bir kitap yazmıyor ama okuyor ediyor. Benim sorum, neden siz kendinizi bu kadar ön plana çıkarmayı seçtiniz. Ben onlara bunu soruyorum.

T : Peki ne cevaplar alıyorsun?

B : Değişiyor. Bazen tam olarak onlar da açıklayamıyorlar. Bana bazen şey gibi geliyor, onlar da tam olarak ne yaptıklarını bilmiyor gibiler. Bazen bazıları çok ezberlenmiş kalıplaşmış cümleleri söylüyorlar. Böyle öğretilmiş. Böyle söylemek zorundayız. Ama o insanı böyle çekemezsin gibi geliyor. [...]

T : Peki bu gruplarda sana yabancı gelen neydi?

B : Arkadaşlarım için düşünürsek, onlar bir grubun içerisine girmişler. Çoğundan bahsediyorum hepsinden değil. Bir grubun içerisine girmişler. Mesela bir sokakta oturuyorlar, bu tarz grupların olduğu sokakta. Anneleri, babaları, ağabeyleri, ablaları, büyük çoğunluğu o gruptaki insanları tanıyor. Onlar da gruptaki insanları ağabey, abla gibi görmeye başlıyor. Sonra onların etrafında takılmaya başlıyorlar. Onun doğru bildiği her şeye doğru demeye başlıyorlar. Evet nedenini soruyorlar ama, nedenini sorduktan sonra, o doğru. Başka şeyler de merak edip, ama bu da varmış demiyorlar.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> B : So many people are being taken into custody and are attending protests. When many of them also start to take part, there occurs something that attracts people. Of course, people ask why those are doing that. Whether someone has a blind faith in it, people say that “Look! This one also attended”. Because of curiosity, there is an attractive thing.

T : Is there anything that attracts you?

B : I wonder why they do that. For everyone, it is different. However, what I really wonder is that many people do something. Some write, some draw pictures, and some take photos. Others only wait if they have thought in their minds. They do not put that into action. Some others do not write anything, but read. My question to them is why they choose to bring themselves into the forefront. I ask them about it.

T : What kind of answers do you receive?

B : It changes. Sometimes they cannot express clearly. Sometimes it seems to me that they do not know why they are doing. Some of them make very stereotyped and memorized sentences. They were taught in that way, and they feel obliged to express in that way. You cannot attract one in this manner. [...]

T : What does seem to you strange in those groups?

B : Regarding my friends, they have taken part in groups. I mean not all of them, but many. For instance, they are living in a street which this kind of groups exists. Their mother, fathers, brothers, sisters, many of them know people

For her, the formation of life around political groups is another way of subjection to social norms. Acting in this way seems to her as closing other possibilities. In imagining a future, common practices of political groups are considered by her as new boundaries for her life.

Bir yerden sonra, onlar istemese bile, sana belirli kalıplar verilmiş oluyor. Belirli çizgiler koyulmuş oluyor hayatında. Onlar da o kalıpları savunuyorlar. [...]Hani o siyasi görüşleri içerisinden hangi bölümüne gidersen git, onlar sana bir şey söylediğinde, oradaki insanların hemen hemen ne söyleyeceğini biliyorsun. Şimdi mesela atıyorum, bizim mahallede, benim tişörtüme bir laf söylediğinde, ben cevap verdiğimde, onların hepsinin yine bana ne diyeceğini biliyorum. Hepsi hemen hemen aynı şeyi söyleyecek. Ne giydiğin, ne konuştuğun, ne söylediğin, nasıl yürüdüğün, nasıl davrandığın, her şekilde kısıtlanıyor.<sup>85</sup>

Berfu says that remaining only within the spaces of Okmeydanı and forming her subjectivity in line with local codes prevent her from reaching new opportunities. While she understands the political struggle of youth in Okmeydanı, for her there could be other ways for freedom struggle. Entrapped by dominant local structures, she feels another form of oppression. She does not achieve her freedom to express herself individually within the space. For her, there should be ways out of the space to transgress boundaries.

T : Peki, İstanbul'un başka yerlerinde kendini daha özgür hissediyor musun?

B : Evet.

T : Peki o özgürlüğü burada elde edemediğini mi düşünüyorsun?

B : Elde edemedim değil de, özgür değilmişim gibi geliyor. Oralarda hiç değilse, daha rahat hissediyorum. Daha fazla şey katıyor gibi geliyor bana. Daha fazla şey fark ediyordum gibi geliyor.

T : Buradan nasıl farklı?

B : Yürürken daha rahat hissediyorum mesela. Hani bana bakıp bir şey demediklerini biliyorum. Hani deseler bile en fazla 10 dakika beni

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in those groups. Then, they begin to consider them as brothers and sisters, and stick around them. They begin to take anything as right, which people in a group accept so. Yes maybe, they ask why, but after asking, it is a truth for them. They do not wonder other things.

<sup>85</sup> After a point, even if they do not want to do, you are given certain patterns. Certain lines are drawn in your life. They always defend these patterns, too. [...] When you take part in whatever group, and they say to you about something, you know almost what they will say. [...] For instance, in our neighbourhood, when I am said something about my t-shirt, I respond to that, I know what they will say to me. Almost all of them will say the same thing. What you wear and say, how you walk and behave become restricted in any way.

konuşacaklar. 10 dakika sonra başka bir şeye geçmiş olacaklar. Beni etkileyen birşey yok, ama bana katan çok fazla şey olabiliyor. [...]Başka biri olmaya itmiyor seni. Başka bir şekilde yürümeye ya da başkası gibi davranmaya itmiyor yani. O açıdan rahatlık var diyorum.<sup>86</sup>

She is also frustrated by the presence of violence in everyday life. She thinks that the formation of life around violence makes people accept present conditions and prevent them from achieving new possibilities.

Kendimde durup farketdiğim en sinir bozucu şey ne biliyor musun okmeydanı'nda? Neredeyse, her hafta olmazsa bile, ayda en az iki-üç kere çatışma çıkıyor. Biber gazları kapsüller hepsi havada uçuşuyor. Bazen duymamazlıktan geliyorum. Televizyon izlemeye devam ediyorum olabiliyorum veya arkadaşlarıma mesajlaşmaya devam edebiliyorum. Bir keresinde, burada çatışma çıkmıştı yine, ne zamandı tam hatırlamıyorum. Daha başlamamışlardı ama hazırlanıyorlardı. Bir tane havai fişek attılar. Kafamın üstünden geçti. Değmedi ama hemen yakınımıdaki duvarda patladı. Parçaları yakınımaya düştü. Hiçbir şey olmamış gibi devam ettim. Bence bu çok büyük bir şey. Biz bunlara bu kadar mı alıştık? Bu şeylere o kadar alışınca bir şeyleri kaybetmeye başlıyorsun. Tekrar tekrar aynı şeyleri söylemeyi yaşamaya başlıyorsun. Aynı yerde dönmeye devam ediyorsun. Dışarıya çıktığında, burada dönmeyeceksin, aynı şeylere sıkışıp kalmayacaksın, farklı şekillerde yapacaksın. O yüzden dışarı çıkmak gerekiyor bence.<sup>87</sup>

For her, belonging to the space and political representations deeply is something that hinder her possible encounters with different transformations. In her account, main themes revolve around being “stucked” in here which offers nothing to him, but repetitive actions and same patterns. In these patterns, she feels obliged to expected

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<sup>86</sup> T : Do you feel more freedom in other spaces in Istanbul?

B : Yes.

T : Do you think you could not obtain freedom here?

B : Not obtaining, but I feel I am not free here. There, I feel more comfortable at least. I think that those spaces improve myself more. It seems to me that I realize much more.

T : How is it different from here?

B : For instance, I can feel more comfortable while walking. I know that they will not look at me and talk about me. If they talk, it is only for ten minutes. After ten minutes, they will talk about another topic. There is not anything that affects me. But there are many things that improve me. [...] That does not force you to become someone else. It does not force you to walk in another manner, or behave like someone else. That is why I say there is more comfort out there.

<sup>87</sup>Do you know what is the most annoying thing in myself in Okmeydanı? Almost two or three times a month, if not every week, there are violent clashes. Pepper gasses and bullets, all of them, are everywhere. Sometimes, I ignore them. I continue to watch TV, or message with my friends. At one occasion, there was again a clash with the police, I do not remember exactly when it is. They (demonstrators) had not started yet, but they were preparing. They fired a firework. It went just over my head. It did not touch me, and it hit the wall near me. Its pieces came closer to me. I still continued to walk as if nothing happened. I think that is very important thing. Did we get used to those things that much? When you get used to those things, you start to lose something. You start to experience the same thing ever and ever. You become stuck in doing same things. When you go outside, you will not do things in the same way, rather in other ways. So, it should be to go outside.

norms and she does not consider her identity as the part of her self. Getting used to violence seems to her incomprehensible, because, for her, it only reproduces existing conditions into which she was born. She does not find a personal struggle in collective actions of political groups and the language of resistance and violence. Thus this requires her to transgress both dominant local structures and spatial boundaries. Indeed the formation of youth subjectivities is very bounded with the space in Okmeydanı. For instance, in the example of political subjectivities, most of my interviewees see the space as a “country”, in which to go outside needs more effort for politicized young people. Many of them feel an immense uneasiness to interact with the other spaces in Istanbul. Political groups provide the basis of counter public spheres for youth around the language of political resistance and violence. Yet, the formation of counter public in Okmeydanı includes a self-isolation (Fraser, 1990). Fraser argues that “subaltern counterpublics have a dual character. On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training ground for agitational activities directed toward wider publics” (ibid. 68). This is also the context of many political groups in Okmeydanı. Moreover, counterpublics in Okmeydanı require a spatial enclave. Many political demonstrations and clashes with the police occur on the same streets within certain boundaries. It has its own language, moral codes and responsibilities, strengthening local structures. Transgressing local structure, therefore, requires spatial transgressions. The landscape of Okmeydanı offers two possibilities. On the one hand, it provides a counter public sphere of political groups in which politicized youth formulate their “identities, interests and needs” (ibid.), bringing with withdrawal into the space. On the other hand, the specific location of Okmeydanı also has the possibility of the way out of this public sphere. As Berfu’s account shows, “it should be to go outside” to open up new possibilities. She wants to differentiate her individual formation from dominant discourses of local structures. In turn, it makes her recast her identity and personal struggle within the broader context of Istanbul.

Dilek, 23 years old Kurdish female, whom I introduce in Chapter 2, also feels distant from both political groups in Okmeydanı and Kurdish political movement in general. Her childhood was in Muş, a city in the southeastern of Turkey. Her father also involved in political actions, and her family experienced raids of the Turkish army. She remembers her childhood in the village where she was born.

D : Muş'u hayal meyal hatırlıyorum. Dış köyler yakıldı, ama bizim köy yakılmadı. Genelde zaten kürtçe konuşamıyorsun. Polisin karşısında bir köylünün korkudan titrediğini görmüştüm bir kere. O kadar korku baskı vardı. İnsan ne için yaşar? Onuru şerefi için yaşar. Ama insanları eşlerinin karşısında tir tir titriyorlardı. Polis geliyor denildiği zaman, böyle bir kargaşa oluyordu. İşte köye gelen bir yol vardı. Arabalar görüldüğü zaman, sanki bütün köye cenaze gelmiş gibiydi.. Suskunluk bürünüyordu, kara bulutlar geliyordu. Böyle bir şey oluyordu.insanlar korkuyordu. Çocuklar böyle saklanıyordu. Böyle şeylere şahit oldum.. Geliyorlardı işte birini falan soruyordu. Sordukları zaman da işte karşı taraf çat pat türkçe'siyle ne kadar ifade ettiyse. Alıp götürüyorlardı bazen de. İşkence de gerçekten vardı devletin içerisinde. Köyde asker tarafından tecavüze uğrayan gençler dahi vardı.

T : Peki, sen ailede birşey yaşadın mı?

D : Tabiki. O zaman çok küçüktüm. Benim babam genelde dağdaki insanlara yardım ediyordu maddi açıdan, çünkü o zamanlar maddi durumu vardı benim babamın. Siyasetten yargılanan bir insandı. Yardım ediyordu ve genelde polis tarafından eve baskınlar oluyordu, babamı silah yardım etmekle suçlayarak. Bir keresinde silahın yerini söylememe gibi bir durum olmuştu. O zamanda, annem hamileyken polis şiddete maruz kalmıştı.<sup>88</sup>

After the migration to Istanbul, her family suffered from economic problems. Dilek has been under the pressure of her father. As I mentioned before, she and her older sister has gained a relative liberation after contributing to family economy. The more they carried the responsibility of family economy, and the more they became freed from kinship relations. Yet, for Dilek, this process was done immediately. While she was working for her family, her father still continue not let her with personal activities. However, she was determined to push the limits of her family, and she found the chance in developing her economic power in the family. She started a career in a textile company. At that period, she developed new ways to increase her salary. With the help

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<sup>88</sup> D : I remember Muş unclearly. Villages around our village was burned, but ours did not. People could not speak Kurdish in any case. Once I saw thahr a villager was shivering from fear before the police. There was that much fear and oppression. For what does one live? People live for their honors. But, there, people were shivering from before the eyes of their wives. When it was said that police or army are coming, there occurred usually a chos. There was a road into the village. When vehicles were seen, it was as if a funeral came to the village. Silence prevailed, and dark clouds were over the village. People were being afraid. Children were hiding. I witnessed this kind of things. When they(the army, or poilce) came, they inquired after someone. When they asked, people tried to express themselves with a smattering of Turkish. And sometimes, they took some people into custody. There was indeed torture in the state. There were even young people who were raped by the army.

T : Did you experience something in your family?

D: Of course. At this time, I was too young. My father helped to those on the mountain, because my father had good financial situtaion then. My father was put on trail for political reasons. He was helping them, and the police raided our house regularly, my father being accused of providing them with guns. Once, when he did not said where an arms cache was, my mother, who was pregnant at that time, was exposed to police violence.

of her older sister, she attended design and computer courses to learn development softwares and fundamentals in the textile industry. This opened new areas of freedom to encounter with new possibilities in Istanbul. First her father did not allow her to attend the course.

Maddi desteği unut gitsin. Maddi destek zaten yok. Maddi açıdan zaten desteklemiyor. Benim eve verdiğim paradan en ufak kuruş eksilsin, bu benim hayatıma öyle bir yansıma yapar ki. Hiçbir şekilde kursa gitmeme bile izin vermez. Ben dedim ki babama ,işte dedim genelde modelistlerin aldığı maaş 3000 lira dan başlıyor. O zaman kabul etti gitmeme. Paranın gözünü seveyim, en namuslu insanı bile yoldan çıkartır.<sup>89</sup>

Through her work life, she has gained her relatively liberated position step by step. In her temporal adjustments to deal with her problems, she found new imaginations of future as a more liberated woman. Thus, as I showed in Chapter 2, “Istanbul is a chance” for her, belonging to her hometown does not take any important place in her mind in the present. Her remembrance of the village and memory of collective violence are distant images from the present. In other words, her memory does not resonate with her present condition affectively. This shows that memory of collective violence is rephrased by very present imaginations and possibilities. The reaprobation of memory in identity and belonging is selective, present-bounded, reciprocal and open to new transformations. Whether or not events of collective violence are brutal and powerful, the ‘deepness’ of memory in personal identities is very related to subjective process of individuals.

When Dilek gained more economic power and interacted with new friends in Istanbul, she wanted to obtain more freedom in her individual life. However, her attempt was again reciprotated by her father’s prohibitive acts. When she was 20 years old, she wanted to buy a motorbike both to commute and to drive with her friends in leisure time. She did not receive a positive response from her father. At this time, her older sister also did not help her due to both possible reactions in the family and that she assumed riding a motorbike as a dangerous activity. For Dilek, this reaction became an ultimate manifestation of her frustrations and grievances in the family. She decided to marry with a man ‘nominally’, whom she did not know well, to get rid of familial

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<sup>89</sup> Forget about money support. There was not any material support. He did not help me in terms of money anyway. If the amount of money I give to my family decreases, it affects my life so much so that he does not allow me to attend any course. But I said my father that salary of designers starts with 3000 Turkish liras. Then he agreed. It is money, I mean, which perverts morals of the most honest individual.



constraints. Her resolution made her older sister accept to support her against their father. Then, she abandoned her marriage decision, and now remember it as a childish action.

Çok çalışıyorsun. Çok zor şartlarda bir noktaya geliyorsun. Ama bazen psikolojik olarak çok etkileniyorsun bazı şeylerden falan. Sonra evde rahatlık yoktu. Bir yere çıkmak istiyorsun, ama çıkamıyorsun çünkü belirli bir saatin var. İşe git gel, köle gibi. Artık bir noktadan sonra, patlama noktasına geliyorsun. Özgür değilsin. Ruhun daralıyor. Motorsiklet alamamak da bu sıkıntılar bir örneğiydi. Sonra birçok problem üst üste gelince, hani böyle bir noktaya geliyorsun. Artık çözüm istiyorsun bitsin istiyorsun kurtulayım istiyorsun. Kurtulmak deyince de saçma sapan şeylere karar verebilmekten bahsediyorum. Şu an tebessüm ediyor. Acaba yapar mıydım gerçekten? Sonra iyi ki de yapmamışım, iyi ki de motor almışım. İyi ki de yapmamışım yani, çünkü sonu daha kötü olabilirdi.<sup>90</sup>

In one way or another, she tried to make temporal adjustments in her life. Marriage decision was also one of them which could make worse her conditions. Yet, what I emphasize here is that Dilek's account shows that she reevaluates her options in the face of new possibilities and failures. In her patient engagement with her problems, she did not decide an immediate action, but tried to repair and improve her familial relations and obtain more freedom. In Okmeydanı, she has been not attracted by collective struggle for freedom in Kurdish political movement, or other political groups. Indeed, there are many examples in which women could find areas of freedom in Kurdish political struggle. Moreover, in the context of Okmeydanı, Zeynep's narrative in Chapter 2 shows us that she frames collectivities in political groups as more free areas than her home. She envisages a collective struggle to gain her freedom. What Dilek's account shows us is that she did not put an immediate action with the rupture from her family. Rather, she developed temporal solutions to repair her conditions in the family. She also remembers her initial feelings about violent struggle and political groups.

D : Hani şöyle, bir öfkem olduğu zamanlarda, farklı çatışmalara katılarak, bu şekilde de kusabilirdim o öfkemi. Bu şekilde kustuğum

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<sup>90</sup>You work hard. Under very harsh conditions, you reached to a point. But, sometimes, you could be affected psychologically. There was not comfort in the family. You wanted to go outside, but you would not, because you were restricted to certain period. It is only commuting between job and home, like a slave. After a point, you reached to an unbearable point. I mean, you were not free. You feel suffocating sometimes. Not being able to buy a motorbike was an example of these problems. After overlapping of many problems, at this point, you want a solution. You want all problems to end and to be freed of them. I mean with being freed that you can decide this kind of childish thing (marriage), now it makes me smile. I wonder if I could do so really? So, I am glad of not having done such a thing. I am glad to have bought a motorbike. Because it could end up in a worst way.

zaman, aile giriyor işin içine. Bu annem, ablam, babamla olan ilişkilerime yansıtıyordum, otomatikman aile içinde bir huzursuzluk olacaktı. Bunu istemediğim için, ister istemez bastırdım öfkemi.

T : Peki sen böyle bir şey istiyor muydun?

D : Tabii ki, istemez miyim hiç. Elbette bende istiyorum çalışmalara katılmak. Çünkü onlara karşı bir şey hissediyorum. Ben de sizin karşınızdayım, ben de burdayım demek. Karşılarında olmak muhakkak ben çok istedim. Dediğim gibi, babamı, annemi düşünerek; ablam nasıl bana adadı ise, kardeşlerime yardım etmek için; ben de onun yüzünü asla kara çıkarmamak için; aile içinde huzursuzluk olmaması için, sadece ne yapıyorum şu anda, klasik olarak kendi ayaklarımın üzerinde duruyorum. Evde huzurumuz var mı şu an? Var. Sağlığımız var mı? Var. Şu an onun mücadelesindeyim. Sadece hayatla mücadele içerisindeyim. Dediğim gibi o sürecin içinde öfkemi kendi içimde bastırdım.

T : Peki, şu anda da bastırmak için mücadele ediyor musun? Bazen bu şekilde göstermek istiyor musun yine?

D : Yok. Artık şu an çok uzak bana.

T : Ne değişti peki?

D : O zamanlar, ailemle bu noktaya gelebileceğimi düşünmüyordum. Bu kadar şeyi aşayacağımı hayal etmiyordum. Şu an bizi bu kadar çok benimseyeceğini yani. Çünkü çok zordu babam gerçekten. Benimsemediği süreci düşününce... Çünkü bir şey yoktu. Hani çırpınıyorsun ama bazen boşa çıktığını görüyorsun. Çünkü o boşluk vardı hep. Ama, işte ablam manevi olarak yanımda duruyordu. Düşününce seni böyle tutuyor, onu görüyorsun o süre içerisinde. Bunu gördüğün zaman, “tamam diyorsun ya ben bunun için, ben ablam için, o beni böyle şey yaparken, hadi toparlan silkelen, şu an yıkılmaya hakkın yok, bu hakkını nereden buluyorsun”. Bu şekilde bastırıyorsun. Sonra boşluğa düşünce bazen, düşüncelerin bir sürü yerlere gidiyor. Ben de çalışmalara katılmayı şuraya gideyim falan. Bende polise karşı öfkeme göstereyim, bir yandan onu düşünüyorsun. Bir yandan babamı düşününce, tamamıyla yok diyorsun. Ya tabiki, gidip gelmeler yaşıyorsun. Şu anki durumumda, kendi ayaklarımın üzerinde biraz daha sağlam basıp, maddi açıdan rahat yaşayabilmek için bir şeylerin mücadelesini veriyorum.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>91</sup> D : When I had anger, I could have spilled out hatred in different clashes. Yet, when I express in this way, the family becomes the main issue. If it had an impact on the relations between my mother, sister and father, naturally there could be an unrest in the family. To avoid this, you necessarily repress your anger.

T : Did you want to express your anger in that way?

D : Of course, I wanted. I wanted to involve in activities. Because you feel things against them. To express that I am also here, I am standing against you, no doubt, I also wanted to do this. As I said, thinking about my family, my mother and my siblings, and to help my siblings just as my older sister devoted herself to me, and not to disappoint her, what I am only doing is to support myself in classic ways. Is there now a peace in my family? Yes. Are we healthy? Yes. I am now struggling for these things. I am only in the struggle for life. As I said, I repressed my anger in this process.

T : Are you struggling to repress these feelings now? Do you sometimes want to express in this way?

In her narrative, the point is that she encountered with another possibility of future which she had not thought before. She was not thinking that “she could not reach to this point” in her life. This is not only her father’s embracement of her and reparation of her position in the family. Rather, more importantly, she reached to more freedom and possibility of spaces in which she expresses herself more clearly. Yet, this did not occur from an immediate rupture from her family, but through everyday forms of dealing with problems. This patient work also repaired her relationship with her father, and strengthened her position in the family due to her economic power. She identifies herself as a “rebellious”(asi) person. Yet this rebellious identity is not embodied in political struggle, but in her individual struggle. In her account, she did not mention anything about effects of Kurdish political movement on liberation of women from constraints of kinship relations, nor its transformative effect on those relations. This is beyond my research, but it is possible to think that Kurdish political movement and PKK struggle in southeastern regions of Turkey indeed have engendered important transformations in gender relations in Kurdish families (Darıcı, 2009). Yet Dilek’s self-representation is far from collective political struggle. She narrates her life story as a personal struggle and resistance in urban space which seems to her to have provided different opportunities, one of which is economic power. Thus she does not imagine any future in political groups in Okmeydanı.

Okmeydanı'ndaki olaylarda, insanlar molotof attığında veya sloganlar falan olduğunda, baktığım zaman, insanlara oturup da neyi savunuyorsun dediğim zaman, gerçekten mantıklı bir cümle çıkmıyor ağzından. Ya saçma sapan şeyler oluyor. Haklı olsun olmasınlar, hemen tepki göstermeye başlıyorlar. Bir kere bile ama neden demiyorlar. Ya da neden olsa bile, taşı fırlatmak marifet değildir, kalkıp karşı tarafa zarar vermek de marifet değildir.<sup>92</sup>

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D : No, it is now very far away from me?

T : What changed?

D : At that time, I was not thinking that I could reach to this point with my family. I could not imagine that I would overcome those things that much. I mean my father’s embracement of us now. Because my father was really hard. When I think the times my father did not acknowledge us... Because there was nothing. You were struggling, but sometimes, you saw that you reached to nothing. There was always this nothingness. But my older sister remained closer to me. When you see she supports me that much, you say yourself “Ok, for her, you don’t have the right to collapse, and pull yourself together. How do you find this right?” You repress it in this way. When sometimes you become depressed, your thoughts could suddenly go into different directions. On the one hand, you think to let you attend political activities and let you express your feelings against the police. On the other hand, when you think your father, you abstain from it. Of course, you oscillate between two points. But now, I struggle to support myself more steadily and live comfortably in economic terms.

<sup>92</sup> When people throw molotov cocktails or shout slogans in demonstrations in Okmeydanı, and when I ask people what are you defending, there are not any logical sentences in their talks. These are foolish things. Whether they are right or not, they immediately start to react. They do not question the reason even once. Or, if there is a reason, it is not a skill to throw stones or hurt your opponents.

She also does not need a political struggle for her Kurdish identity. She thinks that in her life, she expresses her Kurdish identity freely and clearly. This is enough for her to embody her identity. She does not think that there is a need for violent political struggle, like in the 1990s. Kurdish political movement of youth in the present does not take a part in her life.

D : Daha önce, ben Kürdüm diyemiyordum. Kürtçe şarkı dinleyemiyordum. Bu da kötü birşeydi. 30 senenin mücadelesi kendi anadilini konuşabilmek içindi. Kalkıp, Kürdistan'ı kurmak ya da şunu bunu yapmak için değil yani. Bu son zamanlarda çıktı kürdistan'ı kurmak. Bir şeyleri aştık. İşte onuru şerefi mücadele eden insanların emeğiyle bir noktaya geldik. Artık Kürdistan'ı bırakıp, eğitime insanlara değer verip, insanları bir noktaya getirmek gerekir. Yemişim senin Kürdistan'ını. Kürdistan beni kurtaracak mı? Yani şimdi kursalar, bana sorarsan, benim gibi düşünen birçok insan gitmez ki. O yüzden ben kurmaktan yana değilim.

T : Kursa da gitmem diyorsun. İstanbul'da daha çok olasılık olduğunu mu düşünüyorsun?

D : Ya şu an, zaten benim, İstanbul'da, kimseye bir zorunluluğum yok. Genel baktığımız zaman şu an bir sıkıntı yok ki. Kürdüm diyebiliyorum. Kürtçe konuşabiliyorum.<sup>93</sup>

She also feels distanced from violent political struggle. There are alternative ways for her struggle.

Ben buradaki çalışmalara, polise karşı, bu ortamda katılıyım diye düşünürdüm baze. Ama asla dağa gitme düşüncesine sahip olmadım. Düşünüyordum, ya diyordum kız erkek orada nasıl yaşıyorlar diye. [...] Sonra, insan normalde çok soğukkanlı ya da çok cesaretli olması gerekiyor silahı alıp da karşıdaki insanı öldürmek için. Mantık olarak baktığımız zaman kimse o kadar cesaretli değildir. O hayat bana daha çok ürkütücü geliyor. Uzak, bir de ürkütücü geliyor. Yani mesela oraya gittim diyelim. Annem var, küçük kardeşimlerim var. Onlara kim bakacak? [...] Onları düşünüyorum, onlar ne yapar? Onlara kim bakar? Neden gidip elalemin kapısında çalışsın yani? Sen sonuçta çalışıyorsun, ayaklarının üzerinde duruyorsun. Bir şekilde bu zorluğu yaşamıyorsun? Niçin onlar aynı şeylerin yaşasınlar? Bunlar düşündüğüm zaman, ya ne bileyim, çok çok uzak, uçurum gibi birşey. Oraya

<sup>93</sup> D : Before, I could not say I am Kurdish. I could not listen Kurdish songs. That was a terrible thing. The struggle for 30 years was to speak mother tongue. It is not to establish Kurdistan or do other things. To establish Kurdistan is a thing of recent times. We have overcome some things. We reached to a point after the endeavour of people who struggled their honor and reputation. Giving up of establishing Kurdistan, now it is required to care education and make people reach to better points. Forget about Kurdistan. Will Kurdistan save me? Let's suppose that it is now established. If you ask me, many people who think like me will not go there. Thus I am not the part of establishing it. T : You say you will not go there if it is established. Do you think there are many possibilities in Istanbul?

D : Now, in Istanbul, I do not have any necessity to anyone. In general, there is no problem now. I can say I am Kurdish. I can speak Kurdish as well.

gidenlere birşey demiyorum. Ama, bence, mücadele farklı yollardan yürütebilirler.<sup>94</sup>

For Dilek, Kurdish political movement has achieved its goal. What should have been done has been done. Now, there should be another ways to imagine a future. This way of thinking creates a rupture from collective memory of the community, recasts agencies in different manners from the community. As I showed, she experienced collective violence in the village. Yet, now, she does not make sense her life around violence and collective struggle. Past of collective violence does not enter to her life, or she does not *allow* it to enter. For her, there are different possibilities of future in Istanbul, all of which are unpredictable, and yet generative in her life. Maybe, this unpredictability attracts her attention because, in this way, she keeps a variety of possibilities in her life which could help her experience her life more freely. All of my interviewees experience a lack of coherent future, and Dilek do so. What is different, however, is that she does not close her future in a certain political project. Even though she does not what will happen to her life in future, or what is the best way to live, she keeps herself open to possible transformations. As she searches of different forms of struggle in her life, she closes her past into the past, rather reappropriating it in the present. For her, past is remembered as a thing of past, and it is now “far away” from her life. I assume that “forgetting” and/or ruptures from collective memory of violence and resistance of Kurdish movement is an intentional act to get rid of constraints of possible futures offered in this struggle and the boundraies of community. As Jonathan Spencer (2000) argues, “[t]he chronology of political violence often appears irreversible: past violence, in the form of memories of the dead, constrains the possible options for action in the future” (120). “[A]cts of violence which would, in turn, create [...] further political and social possibilities, while closing off possible alternatives” (ibid. 136). On the other hand, he points out that the agency could find new ways out of local structures of political violence and collective memory. It is possible for those, who are exposed to selective memory of violence and resistance and social force of public remembrance, to create a vision of individualitiy not based on violence. He frames this

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<sup>94</sup>I sometimes thought only to engage with activities against the police here. Yet, I have not any thought to go to mountain. I was thinking how men and women live together there. [...]Moreover, one should have so courage, or calmness to take a gun and kill one opposite you. In all reason, no one could be that brave. This life seems to me scaring. It is both far from me and scaring. Let’s suppose I go there. I have mother and younger siblings. Who will care of them? [...]I think of them and I ask myself what will they do? Why will they have to work? You now work and support youserlf. In a kind of way, you have experienced this hardship. Why will they face same problems? When I think these things, it is far away, I do not know, it seems like a cliff. I do not say anything about those who went there. Yet, for me, struggle could be sustained in different ways

act as a “incomprehension of both sides in the violence”. He elaborates that “that incomprehension is not necessarily a failure: it may represent an intentional refusal to comprehend. This refusal to comprehend the moral force of the argument for violence can in turn provide the space for an intentional refusal to act” (ibid.).

In this context, Dilek does not “comprehend” social force of collective memory of violence because she wants to act in another ways. Her so-called “failure” becomes a prerequisite to construct her self in another domain. Now, for her, “it is far away from” her life and a “scaring thing” which entraps her into certain relations that she wants to get rid of. What I argue is that this process is very subjective and present-bounded one. Here, I want to remind again Jindar’s story. She told me that she had a perfect family relation and her father has always supported her in her decisions. Yet, she has not thought a future independent from a political project. Unlike Dilek, living in Okmeydanı is not an important part of her life. Jindar says in her account that “I do not feel any belonging to here”<sup>95</sup>. Memory of her family members in the struggle haunts her presence in the future, and shapes her possibilities of future. This haunting occurs because she recast her identity around this struggle. Her understanding of Kurdish struggle as her “reality” is not irreversible, but rather, her subjective formation attaches herself to this “reality”. That is, the construction of reality is very bounded to how subjects understand their past and how they envisage their futures. That is, agency of subjects is a powerful domain to decide over violent and non-violent acts. Subjectivity of youth could develop different methods to attach or escape to from local structures. In the midst of very affective relations of violence and resistance, subjectivity could find an ‘independent’ place in which all meanings and local forces could be reinterpreted. Jindar encloses her future into Kurdish political movement and memories of her friends and family members create her yearning of a space which she assumes is the real place she belongs. In doing so, her reappropriation of collective memory of political struggle is sustained again and again in the present. Past becomes her present and future. For, at the very beginning, she envisages her struggle, resistance and search for freedom in the collective struggle of Kurdish community. In her account, memory is not memory-as-past, but memory-as-present, because she *needs* this kind of memory to construct a coherent self in her self-representation. She is interaction with exchanges between past and present in her life. In this sense, to what extent youth reproduce feelings and moral

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<sup>95</sup> Kendimi buraya ait hissetmiyorum.

codes of local structures shaped by violence in their inner lives, or they ‘refuse’ to articulate with those structures is very related with desires, hopes, and failures of subjects. Although personal and collective memory of violence and traumatic witnessings proclaim violent resistance and transcendental acts, and “violent-historical trajectories” (Biehl, Good and Kleinman, 2007:30) become a social force, shape many places for youth to inhabit in everyday life, youth in Okmeydanı could inhabit the world in different manners against dominant possibilities. Thus, to reiterate, as Das points out, “agency and specifically political agency is not given but achieved” (Das, 1996: 173, cited in Spencer (2000:136)) through youth’s performativities attempts to make sense of the world. Agency both becomes the subjective and the social, but that does not mean there is a superiority of the social over the subjective. Rather, it is a reciprocal process in the exchanges between subjective and inter-subjective relations, and between past and present, in the present to project a future possibility. Dilek’s and Jindar’s stories resembles each other in terms of experiences of violence in political community of Kurdish movement. In the heterogeneous landscape of Okmeydanı, they found different alternatives, but their self-presentations are not antithetical. Nor are those presentations fixed, but rather their stories I described are specific formation of the self in the *present*. Now, they make sense of their social worlds in such ways. Yet, subjectivity is a dynamic process and always open to further-making. Jindar’s attachment to the past and Dilek’s estrangement of political movement could be changed in further conditions. Memory could be appropriated in Jindar’s narrative now, but it could also be ‘forgotten’ in the future, or vice versa for Dilek’s story. For my concern, this shows dynamic process of subjectivity and its relation with exchanges between social worlds and individual trajectories. In this sense, we could reflect upon the possibility of ‘unexpected’ subjectivities in powerful local structures in the sense that subjects’ desire to live make them inhabit the world in very different manners.

### **The Dilemma of Belonging**

As I discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, the landscape of Okmeydanı has a powerful space in terms of affecting youth’s belongings to the space. Since the very establishment of Okmeydanı, resistance and violence has become dominant themes for local people. Youth also consider Okmeydanı as a sacred space in which they feel security and

protection from threats outside. Although Okmeydanı has framed as a ‘dangerous’ and ‘unreachable’ by both the state and the media, the situation for local people is opposite. In previous chapters, I have described this affective aspect of Okmeydanı in youth’s imagination. On the other hand, here I want to delineate possible encounters with other public spheres in Istanbul. This encountering creates the possibility of thinking on some alternatives youth could experience in their lives. Throughout this chapter, I have wanted to emphasize heterogeneity of alternatives for youth experiences in Okmeydanı. That comes from transgressing the boundaries of space, and I argue that this prevents us from describing Okmeydanı as merely an isolated space and youth subjectivities in this isolated conditions. I have argued that attachment, belongings and enclosing youth into the space is also a product of meanings youth give to this space. Yet, it is very possible to interact with other possibilities. Of course, the constant police surveillance and historical structure of violence and resistance in Okmeydanı have powerful force in shaping youth’s attachment to both the space and political groups, which I described in Chapter 3. Yet, there are other possibilities to get rid of constraints of local structures. Scrutinizing these possibilities, I argue, prevents us from ruling out different ways of formation of youth subjectivities.

In this section, I want to draw upon Umut’s personal experiences. As I introduced in Chapter 2, Umut is a 16 years old male, who has been living in Okmeydanı since his birth. He experienced police violence in some occasions, I described in Chapter 2. He felt a security and vulnerability in his life due to police attacks, arrestments of family members and the killing of his friend, Berkin Elvan. He also told us how revolutionary people and groups affected his belonging to the space, and how those people are emblematic of trust, security and honesty in his life. Remember his narrative in Chapter 2. That is, he says that “even if I do not know those guys (revolutionaries), if they have a leftist personality after all, they are trustworthy, I can trust in them.” Around this collective life, the space and revolutionaries have affected his formation of individuality, and resembles what he considers as valuable.

Until he was fifteen years old, he went outside Okmeydanı in occasional situations, such as visiting relatives. Yet, when he was fifteen, he got into a fine arts high school in Kadıköy, a district in the asia side of Istanbul. Rather than commuting between the school and home, since the high school is a boarding school, he started to live in the high school in Kadıköy on weekdays. Now, he return his home on weekends



and on holidays, and most of his time is now outside Okmeydanı. He tells his new experiences outside Okmeydanı in a confused and excited manner. He first stayed with some university students with whom he met through local acquaintances in Okmeydanı. After, he started to live in the dormitory of the school.

Şimdi ben ailem dışında hiçbir şekilde karşıya geçmemişim tek başıma. Kadıköy'e geçtim. Bir abi vardı, yanında kaldığım. Kedi yemeği aldıracaktı bana. Kadıköy'deki kilisenin orada kedi yemi satan bir adam vardı, oraya gittim mesela —evi de zor buluyorum. Mesela okuldan gelirim bir saat boyunca evi ararım. En son öğrendim o zamanda yatakhaneye geçtim. — kedi yemi aldım, tamdönüyorum 2 tane erkek birbirleri ile öpüşüyorlar. Kolkola gidiyorlar. Ben ilk defa böyle birşey gördüm ve korktum da. Mesela yanımdan bir adam geçti, omzunda örümcek maymun var. Böyle bir aptallaştım, ne oluyor falan diye. Sonra gittim abiye dedim böyle böyle. Güldü falan filan. Ondan sonra yatakhaneye geçtim. Baktım, mesela ben hiç çizgi roman bilmem, karikatür dergileri, uykusuz falan var onu okurum. Ama hiç çizgi roman bilmem.ama herkes böyle çizgi roman olayında. İşte böyle değişik zevkler işte. Herşey karışık. Biseksüellik falan filan, ben lisede öğrendim. Ben baya bildiğin biraz daha saftım, Okmeydanı'ndayken.<sup>96</sup>

In this new space, he has witnessed different identities and lives which he did not encounter before. Violence, political groups, police surveillance were internalized in his life. These images have constituted what he understands as life. What they encountered before were masked protestors, violent clashes, political graffitis etc. What he experiences now is alternative ways of expressing identities beyond the closed environment of violence, resistance and the police. In this encountering, he started to requestion local meanings of life and compare his life in Okmeydanı and in Kadıköy. In Okmeydanı, the political youth in one or another political group are dominant figures in everyday life. For Umut, this experience coincides with both confusion and excitement.

U : Ya nasıl desem? İlk defa Kadıköy'e gitmişim. Kadıköy'de üniversiteli abiler vardı. Ortam falan filan çok iyiydi böyle. Gece çıkabiliyordum mesela. Herkes ayaktaydı. Şöyle bir kültür var mesela.

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<sup>96</sup> I had not gone to the other side (the asian side of Istanbul) on my own without my family. I went to Kadıköy. There was an elder brother(abi) with whom I was living. He wanted me to buy cat food. Near the church in Kadıköy, there was a man who sells cat food. I went there —by the way, I was struggling to find the way to home. For instance, after coming from school, I used to search home for an hour. As soon as I learned the way at the end, I went to the dormitory —. Anyway, when I return home after buying cat food, I saw two males kissing each other. They were walking arm in arm. It is the first time I saw such a thing, and I was also afraid. For instace, a guy, who had a spider monkey on his shoulder, passed me. I became stupefied in the sense of what is going on. Then I returned home and told these things to the elder brother. He laughed at me. After, I moved to the dormitory. I do not know any comic books. I only read caricature magazines occasionally, such as Uykusuz. Yet I do not know any comic. I realized that everyone is familiar with comic book etc. Just like this, different tastes. All things are diverse. I learned such things, such as bisexuality, in the high school. When I was in Okmeydanı, I was more naive.

Adam sokak kenarında barda falan birasını içebiliyor öyle. Herkes özgür. İnsan öyle bir şey oluyor, rahat oluyor insan. Hani o taraflar biraz daha şey olmuş, hem kendi kafalarına göreler hem de özgürler. Öyle biraz istediklerini yapıyorlar oradakiler. Sonra buraya geliyorum olay var. Böyle mal mal bakıyorum.

T : Burada özgür değil misin peki?

U : Ya özgürsün ama hani orada adamlar, nasıl desem, kişilikleriyle özgür daha çok. Burada kimse kimseye karışmıyor. Burası rahat. Orada mesela sen dışarı çık ağabey, biraz şöyle meyilli ol, mutlaka birisi gelir kötü şeyler yapar veya bir şeye alıştıırır seni. Mesela benim arkadaşlarım var, okulun arka bahçesinde marihuanayetiştirmişlerdi. Gittim ben kopardım. Biri vardı, evinde arkadaşı ile marihuana çekmiş. Teki var, okulda bonzai kullandığı için atıldı. Bunların da kötü yanları var yani. Her tarafta bir iyi bir kötü var.

T : Peki çok farklı hayatlar gibi mi geliyor sana?

U : Aynen çok farklılar. Zaten hiç Kadıköy'e gitmemişsin. Duyuyorsun böyle işte orada fenerbahçe stadı var, boğa heykeli var. O kadar. Ama oraya bir gidiyorsun, hepsi ayrı bir tip abi. Ben şimdi görmüştüm ya iki tane öpüşen adam, saçları farklı renkli. İkiside erkeğe benziyor, ama teki laf atıyor bana. Bir yanı güzel geliyor bir yanı kötü geliyor.

T: O zaman, oradaki ve buradaki özgürlük farklı mı?

U : Aynen onun gibi birşey. Nasıl desem, farklı ya. İki tarafta da özgürsün. Ama bu tarafta, mesela hiç kötü bir şeyler yok. Ama orada kötü şeyler olduğu kadar iyi şeyler de var. Yani buradaki insanlar, iki erkek bu şekilde geçse buradan, laf falan atarlar, bak falan derler birbirilerine. Ama mesela oradan öyle geçse, kimseye böyle bir şey yapmaz.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> U : How can I say? At the first time, I went to Kadıköy. There were elder brothers from the university. The milieu was terrific. I could go outside at night. Everyone was awake. There is a kind of culture there. For instance, people can drink beers near streets or at bars. That is, everyone is free. One feels more comfortable. I mean other sides have become a bit different, people both have a mind of their own and are free. They could do what they want there. And then, I come here, and there is an incident. I gaze at that in astonishment.

T : Do you feel free here?

U : Yes, you are free. But, there, people, how can I say, are much more freer with their own personalities. Here no one needles in people. But there, when you go outside, if you are a bit inclined, one certainly comes near you, does something bad, and makes you addicted to something. For instance, I have some friends who raised marihuana. I plucked them myself. There is a guy who got high on marihuana with his friend. One was expelled from the school due to using bonzai. These have also bad aspects. On every side, there is a good and bad thing.

T : Do you think these are different lives?

U : Of course, they are very different. I could not realize before because I had never gone to Kadıköy. You knew that there is a stadium of Fenerbahçe, and a statue of bull. That's all. But when you go there, everyone has a separate character. As I said, the men kissing each other had different hair colors, I mean, these were colourful. Both of them seems like a man, but one of them made a pass at me. One side seems to me good, but the other side bad.

T : Then, is freedom different here and there?

U : Yes, something like that. How can I say, these are different. You are free at both sides. Here, there is not something bad, but there are good things as much as bad things on the other side. I mean, when two men walk here in the same manner, people in here say each other "Look at those guys", or make rude remarks. But, when these things happen there, no one does something like that.

Umut's narrative points out two conclusions. First, he realizes that there are other ways of formation of individualities. In this formation, he finds a more comfortable aspect in search of freedom. He compares two freedoms in Kadıköy and Okmeydanı. In his understanding, "these are different". Where does this come from? In Okmeydanı, struggle for freedom is combined with a collective action of violence and resistance. This struggle is through a transfer of the individual to the collective. As I discussed in the previous chapter, this collective struggle encumbers subjects with a burden and responsibility. This burden is sometimes difficult to be carried, because it calls for continuation of political struggle. The landscape of Okmeydanı has been marked by the language of resistance and political sacrifices. It creates local moral codes of the space in which individual realm always encounters with the struggle of the collective. It creates the basis of 'sticking together' people. Moreover, that makes transcending symbolic and spatial boundaries of the space problematic and compelling for youth. For many young people, this transgression is framed as a difficult act in the idiom of *bedel*. Sometimes, this transgression is occluded by feelings of betrayal. In this respect, the political real becomes the place for youth to reproduce meanings and feelings of local structures and attachment to the space in a closed and isolated social milieu. Yet, Umut realizes that there are possibilities to be "free with one's own personality" without adhering to a dominant structure. In his encounter in Kadıköy, he becomes both surprised and confused, but also notices becoming free does not necessarily *demand* certain actions and feelings in his life. Interestingly, he describes freedom in Okmeydanı in the way that "people *both* have a mind of their own *and* are free. They could do what they want there". Why do these features signify the same thing in his mind? Or, why do these combine each other in her life so much so that he uses them as separate things (both/and)? It is because freedom in Okmeydanı is very framed by collective life. Meanings of freedom in local structures come along with expected social norms and actions. This is what the landscape of Okmeydanı includes as "powerful social scripts" (Das and Kleinman, 2000: 11) of local trajectories of life around violence and resistance. Acts of youth for freedom in political demonstrations "anchor the individual to the community" (*ibid.*). What Umut experiences in Okmeydanı is the possibility of feeling free more 'comfortably' and a distant stance toward violence in his struggle. For him, individual freedom could be actualized in other spaces in Istanbul without constraints of local structures.

Unlike Umut, Sinan is more attached to dominant structures, and he performs his political identity in line with local meanings. Interestingly, he describes “individual freedom” as a consequence of degeneration (*yozlaşma*). The discourse of degeneration in Okmeydanı is very prominent among political groups. It is assumed as a threat to break connections between people and destroy political stance of local people. Sinan also criticizes this kind of freedom as degeneration in ‘people’s culture’ (*halk kültürü*).

Halk kültüründe bir hukuk vardır: birbirine uyumlu davranırsın. Mesela büyüklerimizin yanında olabildiğince bacak bacak üstüne atmamak gibi, ufak bir örnek mesela. Daha çok örnek verebiliriz. Ama Amerikan kültüründe özgürlüğü bireysel özgürlük diye yansıtırıyorlar, saygısızlık, bencillik, bireycilik, renklerin tartışılmadığı gibi. Biz buna böyle bakmıyoruz. Bireysel özgürlük hani daha çok yozlaşma olarak geliyor bize. Bizim halk kültürümüzde ne vardır, ortaklık vardır. Yüzyıllardan beri bir ortaklık kültürü vardır. Bir hukuk vardır, herkes buna uyar. Bireysel özgürlük içinde, “hayır!” diyorlar, “ben istediğimi yapmakta özgürüm” diyorlar. Yani kimse bana karışamaz. Biraz anarşizan bir şekilde. Ama böyle değil. Bizim kültürümüzde böyle değil. Bunları da yozlaşma politikası olarak görüyoruz. Mesela görüyoruz, diğer örgütlerde görebiliyoruz, bireysel özgürlüğü ve renkler ve zevklerin tartışılmamağı şeklinde. Biz buna doğru bakmıyoruz, yozlaşma olarak bakıyoruz. Burjuvazinin sol içine sızdırdığı yoz şeyler olarak bakıyoruz yani.<sup>98</sup>

In Sinan’s account, it is clear to show the reproduction of local meanings in a mythical way. He highlights collective freedom through narrating the mythical construction of people’s culture, and considers alternative ways of freedom beyond expected norms as a degeneration of another mythical image of American culture. These are both very homogenous constructions in his narrative. Moreover, it strengthens belongings to the space and isolation from outside in his mind. For him, the individual find a place and a struggle for freedom insofar as it is embedded with the community. For Sinan, local structures of community provides both powerful/ ineluctable domains and clear-cut distinctions in the formation of his political identity. In his account, that creates what I argue as the supreme form of closed language of the political realm in

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<sup>98</sup>There is a law in people’s culture: people behave compatible with each other. For instance, not crossing one’s legs near elders is only one example. We can give many examples. Yet, in American culture, freedom is assumed as individual freedom, such as disrespect, selfishness, individualism, or the argument that ‘colors could not be discussed’. We do not think so. Individual freedom seems to us as degeneration more than anything else. What exists in our people’s culture is collectivism. There has been a culture of collectivism for centuries. There has been a law everyone obeys. Yet, in individual freedom, they say “No! We are free to do whatever we want?”. That is, they say no one interferes in us. It is a kind of anarchistic manner. But, it is not so. It does not take place in our culture. We think these are as the policy of degeneration. We see individual freedom and that “it’s different strokes for different folks” in some political groups. We do not consider them as right and assume as degeneration. We think that these are degenerate things which bourgeoisie make penetrate into the left.

Okmeydanı . Of course, not for everyone, these rigid boundaries are valid in every political group. Yet what I emphasize is that the political realm provides certain social actions. Those political actions, therefore, rule out some alternatives in lives of youth. Sinan's account also homogenize the community as the construction of 'we'. In the blurring of the distinction between the 'I' and the 'we', he narrates his thoughts as an expression of 'we'(people). In doing so, he reproduces his identity again and again to perform 'expected' social norms, and his subjection to dominant structures in Okmeydanı. In "reiterative" acts (Butler, 2011) in terms of both narratives and performances, the subjection of his "I" to the 'we' is actualized. Although he assumes that this social environment into which he was born and constant meanings are part of an eternal thing in his mythical construction of people's culture, he actually reproduces those structures through the articulation with symbolic domain of Okmeydanı.

Yet, on the other hand, the community is itself heterogeneous in Okmeydanı. Moreover, as Umut's accounts show, there is also a variety of possibilities for urban youth to encounter with different ways of freedom. His accounts resemble Berfu's narrative. However, he has not disengage himself from these affective and 'sacred' meanings. This is my second point in his narratives. For him, Okmeydanı still resembles purity, trustworthiness and sacredness. In Chapter 2, he told us about his experiences of police attacks to workplace of his family, and the protection of local people and revolutionaries against the police. Thus, it is understandable that Umut feels a strong attachment to the space and frames it in the sense of the source of things valuable and meaningful to his life. When comparing his experiences in two different spaces, he says that "here, there is not something bad, but there are good things as much as bad things on the other side." There is still a possibility of danger and threat out there. Yet there are also some possibilities to reflect upon different ways of future and inhabit his world. He oscillates between the self and the community, and in every oscillation, he remakes and unmakes his meanings for life. He is not as rigid as Sinan in terms of attachment to the space and political struggle. Nor does he want to get rid of local structures as Berfu does. Rather, he experiences the dilemma of belonging to affective landscape of Okmeydanı in the way of forming his individuality.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed different youth subjectivities developing ways out of dominant social norms of the space. Young people in this chapter has also experienced injuries of political violence and have memory of collective violence. Different from the previous chapter, however, they strive to inhabit their social world beyond expected norms and performances of local structures. They take a different stance toward inherited knowledge of social space. In the exchanges between agency and the community, they develop alternative, fractured and complex subjectivities to transgress local boundaries. Youth in this chapter resist against both vulnerabilities in their life and framework of collective violence, memory and community which force them to perform certain social actions. They develop everyday forms of resistance in patient, long, and sometimes more compelling, actions to both repair their own conditions and project a different future imagination.

My initial argument for this chapter is that large-scale events, collective memory of political violence, and local feelings of the community does *not necessarily* frame youth subjectivities in a unilateral way. Rather, what is equally important is that subjectivity of youth frames memory, local structures and meanings of social word in and for the present. This way of analysis helps us to reflect upon emerging subjectivities out of certain patterns. Past is not reappropriated in the same way by all youth in Okmeydanı. It is sometimes the main basis of subjects to form a political and individual identity, and they anchor the past to their future possibilities as a consequence of this formation. Sometimes, it is transgressed or inhabited in everyday works of remaking and unmaking social world to break out of expected norms, local constraints and generational disputes.

Young people in this chapter feel entrapped into local structures and the dominant and closed language of the political realm. Even some of them are affected and injured by collective memory of violence, poverty, educational problems, they prefer to transgress both structural problems and promises of local structures. This transgression is also related with transgression of the space. Encountering with other space in Istanbul, youth could also learn to inhabit the world differently, and live with the knowledge of memory, violence and resistance in their biographies. Das shows us the importance of ways out of local relationships, expected performances and “poisonous knowledge” to find out the formation of new identities in the midst of powerful collective lives (Das, 2000). In Asha’s story in the partition of India, “she shows that the

way out of this knowledge for many women was not an ascent into some kind of godliness but a descent into everyday life” (Das and Kleinman, 2000: 10). She elaborates that devastating experiences in life do not only attach subjects to the past without the possibility of breaking out of inherited knowledge, but also could give different ways in which subjects “could reinhabit the world”(Das, 2000: 223). She argues “temporal depth [...] shows how one may occupy the very signis of injury and give a meaning not only through acts of narration but through the work of repairing relationships and giving recognition to those whom the official norms had condemned” (ibid.). In this sense, this chapter shows subjects’ different attachment to the past and, through this, their reinterpretation of their social world through negotiations of local norms. Rather than defining themselves in the dominant forms in Okmeydanı, they make complex agencies which could establish a bond between the past and the future in patient works.



## CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have attempted to describe subjectivities of *Okmeydanlı* youth. *Okmeydanlı* youth comes from different backgrounds. Yet the point where they convene is the heterogeneous identity of *Okmeydanlı*. *Okmeydanlı* youth are trapped between inherited problems and failures of the past and uncertainties of the future. In the present, they share a common identity, *Okmeydanlı*, to overcome these problems in their lives. This identity derives from many different sources in a dissident community, such as Alevism, Kurdish identity, political struggle of revolutionaries. None of them per se corresponds to identity formation of youth. Rather, young people develop a new heterogeneous identity at the specific time and space. Youth might experience the same problems of the neo-liberal era within the lack of proper future possibility, but also differently, many inherited problems of political and cultural history of their social



world. In a different manner, political violence becomes the very part of their lives in the present.

In the first chapter, I started to give an outline of political and spatial formation of Okmeydanı. The landscape of Okmeydanı has been marked by struggle of political groups and local people to establish a neighbourhood. Starting its history as *gecekondu* neighbourhood, Okmeydanı witnessed political and economic changes in its spatial configuration for the last four decades. It has become always the place of resistance and violence. In other words, its establishment coincided with a political culture of resistance and violence. This framework constituted an affective attachment for local people in Okmeydanı. After the 1980s, it has undergone spatial transformations due to new urban developments, but what exists is local structures of belonging to the space. After the 1990s, Okmeydanı like other *gecekondu* districts has been reframed as the place of cultural ‘other’ under the label of *varoş*. The struggle over the space, therefore, has combined with the struggle of cultural identities of local people. Since the beginning, but especially after the 1980s, Alevi people began to live in Okmeydanı. Over time, the polarization was transferred from urban scale to the district. In self-representations of local people, it has been divided into upper and lower neighbourhoods. This segregation emerged not on the basis of class-based difference, but rather ethnic-secterian differences, such as Alevi-Sunni, Kurdish-Turkish people. In the upper part of Okmeydanı, which my thesis has focused on, there has been violent clashes between political groups and the police. Moreover, this part has witnessed the politicization of youth in revolutionary groups. There has been also always police surveillance and the shadow of state violence in the district. The political and historical formation of Okmeydanı feeds narratives of living in a revolutionary and dissident community. In this sense, youth start their lives with the extensive repertoire of political struggle and resistance.

While the presence of political groups has always been in Okmeydanı, the conditions of both politicization and life of youth changed. In the second chapter, I have discussed both ongoing and changing conditions of youth in this specific time and space. Secterian and ethnic discriminations of Alevi people in historical trajectory are transferred into lives of youth. This identity-based problems continues to haunt the present time of youth without any sufficient explanations. *Okmeydanlı* youth also experience ruptures from familial relations because family no longer provides a secure

basis for youth. In economic, educational and social problems, youth have to face ongoing problems of being Alevi on their own. Here, family is passive domain in that youth could not find any solution in their families. The vulnerability of youth has become worsened by structural changes. They experience frustration with educational system, lack of proper jobs, and the difficulty of social mobilization. Many resources, such as migration, poverty, violence, also continue to exacerbate precarious conditions of youth. Yet this also opened new ways. With the rupture from both family and conventional ways, youth managed to gain an autonomous sphere to form their identities, and display their problems and failures. Collective life in Okmeydanı organized around political activism become the place of individual formations. In new collectivities, *Okmeydanlı* youth have been formed different from previous generations. This *Okmeydanlı* identity has become a powerful label for youth in the sense that, in this framework, they could channel their grievances from different sources into a single heterogeneous identity. This framework is not adhered to a single homogenous identity, such as Alevism, but has become a combination of different identities and histories in the complex structure of Okmeydanı. Moreover, *Okmeydanlı* identity does not remain as a depictive framework of identities, but also becomes an overarching theme for future possibilities for youth. Thus it becomes both a source of identity and the conditioning of further actions in the struggle of youth.

Indeed, the landscape of Okmeydanı provides a very powerful political language with heroic actions. In the third chapter, I have discussed social and cultural conditions of the formation of political subjectivities. Collective memory of violence, political deaths and resistance gives existential framework to youth. Many related their lives with long political struggle and sacrifices. This affective transmission of memory into political subjectivities occurs through the idiom of *bedel*. *Bedel* does not only glorify the political struggle, but also shapes the framework of what life is. In this sense, I argue that political subjectivities are not only in the domain of the political. Rather youth see the political struggle as way of maintaining their lives and what they assume meaningful and valuable. Life carries the burden of political sacrifices. For most of youth, to make sense of life is articulated with a political struggle. In Okmeydanı, there is not any overarching political group with a specific political future and project. Rather, being a revolutionary takes an important place in future imaginations of youth. Engagement with political struggle has become a way of sustaining a worthwhile life. As a result,

being a revolutionary resonates mainly with individual spheres of subjects. This political attachment is constructed at the axis of violence/resistance. Violence is embedded with youth's construction of their realities and existences. However, I argue that violence is, at the very beginning, embodied language of power relations. Violence is constituted and framed by the state power to restore its sovereignty over subjects. I have discussed that insofar as political youth in Okmeydanı defines their struggle in the mere language of violence against the state without a concrete political project, they become again subjugated to power relations. In this struggle, they find violence as the core of their struggle to obtain the right over their bodies and subjects. Yet what they reach at the end of the struggle is the re-subjection to state power. In this struggle, heroic actions and sacrificial acts become the last point of resistance. In constant violent struggle with the police, they find themselves under the dominion of state power through long imprisonments, marking as usual suspects. In this political struggle, youth undergo the constant cycle of violence and counter-violence. So, violence becomes the tool of dominance of the state over bodies. As a last point to protect the subject/body axis, political deaths or self-sacrifices gain importance in political imagery of political youth. Political subjects lay claim to their bodies and political existence in heroic actions to get rid of the domain of power. Political youth envisage a destructive political future in the end of their struggle. Heroic gestures become the last way to gain freedom in their lives.

In the fourth chapter, I have scrutinized possible ways out of local structures of belonging and political struggle. In this chapter, I discussed that political promises of Okmeydanı urge urban youth to perform specific social actions. In this closed language of resistance, some subjects experience violence and the past not through subjection to local dominant norms, but negotiating them in their everyday lives. In doing so, they could find temporal adjustments and 'gaps' to resist against same problems of political youth and dominant discourse of violence and resistance. I argue that, in this way, they could take a different stance against social pressures. In routine and patient relationships in their lives, they could get rid of the constraints of the social world into which they were born. This chapter also shows the importance of subjective formations in life trajectory. I argue that subjectivity gains an autonomous space in midst of affective social relations to reframe the self. The chapter shows us the complicated relationship between the subject and the social and its reciprocal interaction. To be sure, memory of

the past and affective transmissions of local structures could affect the very way one is, but also subject also reframes, explodes and reconstructs memory and community in a complex agency. I also noted that the specific location of Okmeydanı in Istanbul could give unexpected alternatives to youth. Interactions with other spaces and possibilities, some young people transgress local boundaries.

In conclusion, Okmeydanı is a very affective space for the formation of youth subjectivities. More importantly, I realized that the space marked by the state violence is not an example of absolute surrounding of the state power in terms of both symbolic and material production of the space. Rather, the landscape of Okmeydanı is reproduced by Okmeydanlı youth as a part of their identity formation. What my thesis could not answer is what kind of political actions could be developed in Okmeydanı, rather than current ones which entrap youth in heroic actions. Or, how does the political mobilization of *Okmeydanlı* youth channel their actions into different spheres? In this political struggle, even though violence has marked every part of the life in Okmeydanı, can we think new ways of political imagination beyond violence? These are the questions I ask at the end of the thesis. On the other hand, it is very important to continue to look at the very dynamic process of youth subjectivity in Okmeydanı. It gives us many insights into the question of how youth reappropriate the space and the past in their identities for the future.



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