

VISUAL ECONOMIES OF DISASTER:
THE CIRCULATION OF AN IMAGE OF THE VAN EARTHQUAKE



FUNDA KAYA

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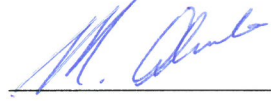
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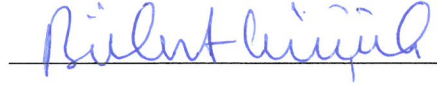
Visual Economies of Disaster:
The Circulation of an Image of the Van Earthquake

The thesis of Funda Kaya
has been approved by:


Prof. Meltem Ahıska
(Thesis Advisor)



Assist. Prof. Bülent Küçük



Assist. Prof. N. Defne Karaosmanođlu
(External Member)



July 2017

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Funda Kaya, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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ABSTRACT

Visual Economies of Disaster: The Circulation of an Image of the Van Earthquake

This thesis focuses on the production and circulation of an earthquake victim's photograph in order to see the processes behind becoming a cultural icon, a symbol of a disaster and an object of pain. It follows the material trajectory of the image that belongs to a 13-year-old victim of the Van Earthquake (2011) in different spaces and temporalities; such as in mainstream print media, in award ceremonies, in political ceremonies and in outdoor campaigns. By following Yunus' photograph, this thesis provides insights on the economy of visibility, dynamics of news production, and formation of news discourses through which, I problematize the formation of hegemonic visual regime of Turkey for disasters. Throughout the thesis, social aspects of disasters, objectivity claims of the photographic medium, the realist gaze, politics of affect, unity of nation via discursive formations, politics of pose, production of idealized victims, framing, politics of pity and humanitarian discourse are discussed to historicize the particular event. The thesis also includes a semi structured in-depth interview with the photojournalist who took the photograph of Yunus, to reveal the production processes in journalism field. In addition, based on the archival data from mainstream national newspapers, an elaborative discourse analysis is held to locate the image in the disasters news discourse. I argue that Yunus's image as an object of pain is constructed as a product of deeply colonial gaze and as an ahistorical depoliticized victim category, and this in return had material effects on the victim's family.

ÖZET

Felaketin Görsel Ekonomileri: Van Depremi'ne Ait Bir Görselin Dolaşımı

Bu tez; kültürel bir ikon, bir depremin sembolü ve acının nesnesi haline gelme süreçlerini tartışmak üzere bir depremzedenin görsel imgesinin üretimi ve dolaşımına odaklanıyor. Van Depremi'nin 13 yaşındaki bir kurbanının imgesinin maddi izleğini farklı zamansal ve mekânsal dolaşımında, örneğin; ana akım yazılı basında, ödül törenlerinde, politik törenlerde, ve dış mekan reklam kampanyalarında takip ediyor. Bir imgenin dolaşımını takip ederek, görsellik ekonomisi, haber üretimi dinamikleri ve haber söylemlerinin kurulumları üzerine tartışmalar ortaya koyuyor ve Türkiye'de felaketlerin görsellik kurulumunu sorunsallaştırıyor. Bu şekilde, Van Depremi tarihselleştirilerek, felaketlerin toplumsallığı, fotoğrafın tarafsızlık iddiaları, gerçekçi bakış, duygu politikaları, söylemsel olarak kurulan toplumsal birlik, pozun politikası, ideal afetzedede tanımı, çerçeveleme, acıma politikaları ve insani söylem gibi konuları ele alıyor. Bu doğrultuda fotoğrafı çeken gazeteci ile yapılandırılmış bir derinlemesine görüşme üzerinden habercilik alanında imge ve haber üretimi tartışılıyor. Ayrıca, ana akım yazılı basın taraması yapılarak felaket haberciliği söylemi analiz ediliyor. Sonuç olarak, Yunus'un imgesinin bir acı nesnesi olarak derin bir sömürgeci bakışı yeniden ürettiği; tarihsiz, politik olmayan ideal bir kurban kategorisi kurduğu; ve tüm bunların Yunus'un ailesi üzerinde belirli somut etkileri olduğunu iddia ediyorum.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to investigate the production and circulation of a photograph that belongs to an earthquake victim of the Van Earthquake that took place in 2011. I took the photograph in its material form as part of the media economy and visual culture. Following the photograph's journey within diverse spatial-temporal contexts, this thesis is an attempt to provide insights on the contemporary economy of visibility, the dynamics of image production, and the formation of disaster news discourses and power relations articulated through them.

On 23 October, and 9 November 2011, two major earthquakes happened in Van (Turkey), which resulted in widespread devastation in the area. After the major shock (7.2 on the Richter scale), the region experienced almost 180 smaller aftershocks daily¹. According to the official reports, 644 people died, 1966 people were injured and 252 people were rescued from the debris alive (AFAD², 2014). The official Van Earthquake Report announced that the total amount of energy released by the earthquake and the aftershocks was 37 times higher than the atomic bomb dropped in Hiroshima in 1945³. Turkey, as a country is situated on a number of fault lines, which has rendered it susceptible to earthquakes, nevertheless it was unprepared for this particular disaster in many ways.

¹ In total 11.000 aftershocks took place, AFAD Report, 2014

² AFAD is a state organization reporting to prime ministry, Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı

³ Retrieved May 2017, from: <https://www.afad.gov.tr/en/2605/About-Van-Earthquake>

In contrast to other recent man-made catastrophic events in Turkey such as bomb explosions in public areas⁴, the hazardous earthquake that came from nature attracted huge attention from the national media. Aerial shots of the damage, the disaster victims, and the photographs of ruins and debris covered all front pages of national newspapers. In mainstream media discourse, Turkey was being imagined as a united country, which was mobilized to heal all “wounds” in the region. In the news media building contractors were cursed as being greedy and immoral, emergency aids flooded (*yardımlar yağdı*) in Van and the resources fairly distributed. Innocent victims were buried all around Turkey with much sadness and grief. Fund raising activities such as concerts/shows were organized; donation campaigns all around Turkey were quickly arranged. In addition, almost all of the national television channels organized live television shows for collecting donations. Many corporations and well-known rich families in Turkey competed to declare the highest amount of contributions live on TV. In general the earthquake became a media event and emotions or tensions felt by society were channeled into action by charity and donation.

On the other hand, it can be claimed that the earthquake itself, as an event, put the internal consistency of the hegemonic discourse and existing hegemonic regimes of the sayable in a crisis. This in turn, created ambivalence and contradictions. The decades-long Turkish-Kurdish conflict marked the mainstream disaster news discourse and the speech of the sovereign indecisive. It was an earthquake that came from nature. Therefore this was regarded as, unfortunate, hazardous, neutral, and associated with relatively depolitized ethos, but at the same time, it occurred in the mainly Kurdish populated geographical area, whose residents,

⁴ Contemporary bombing incidents in Turkey are; Uludere (2011), Reyhanlı (2013), later Ankara (2015), Suruç (2015), Diyarbakır (2015). The latter three banned to be covered by mainstream media.

as a homogenized total, were mostly imagined to align with terrorism. The issue handled delicately for the most part. Besides the atmosphere of helping, pain sharing and charity, it was known that some citizens sent packages to Van that contained stones covered with Turkish flags. Similar to what Butler (2009) states, “grievability is a presupposition for the life that matters” (p.14), concepts such as grievability, recognition, citizenry, humanism, bare life, vulnerability, equality or the imagined unity of the nation, all were in need for “closure” moments in the governing hegemonic discourse.

It is widely known that, following the Van earthquake, a discourse of hatred was prevalent in some mainstream and social media often through insinuations, Freudian slips or sometimes more overt. The anchorman of *Habertürk* said he was very sad “even though” the earthquake happened in the East, in Van. Müge Anlı on ATV infamously said, “Everyone should know their place. You cannot throw stones at our soldiers and then ask for help as if nothing has happened.” The discourse used by people in the social media quickly surpassed the mainstream national media. Some people were calling everyone to pray so that “the PKK loving dogs would die under the rubble” while others were upset that the earthquake was talked about more than the three dead soldiers/martyrs in Hakkari. This faith in divine justice was so pronounced that some claimed innocent Turks would also perish because of the terrorism supporters.

The famous iconic photograph of Yunus Geray emerged in this context. While the discriminative discourse of hate was uprising and getting out of control in the public, Yunus’s image inviting the audience to feel pity, compassion and pain started circulating in the newspapers’ headlines and on the prime time news. Yunus was projected as an “ideal victim” (Höijer, 2004, p.517). His image covered the front

pages of all national mainstream newspapers. Later a call for national mobilization across the country to help the victims of the Van earthquake began. Yunus's image is mostly coupled with captions that emphasize the unity and solidification of a brotherhood bond. He was the ideal brother.

Yunus was a young Kurdish black-haired black-eyed boy of thirteen, a young member of a poor and overcrowded family. He was not taken out from the ruins of a building for a long time. A Reuter's photojournalist, who had just reached the area, took a photograph of Yunus while he was buried under a dead person's body, waiting to be rescued. In the visual material, Yunus's gaze was focused on the audience, and the dead stranger's hand was covering his shoulder. Yunus was alive when he was photographed, and stayed alive during ten hours of rescue efforts, but he did not survive, he died on the way to hospital. Some follow up news regarding his personal life and family were published in the newspapers. He was addressed as the earthquake icon or the symbol of the disaster.

The Van Earthquake news slowly diminished, as did Yunus's visibility and profile. Later Yunus's photograph circulated in different spatial-temporalities, such as in Photo of the Year Award ceremony, in photography exhibitions or in different outdoor campaigns for collecting charity grants. Finally it was given as a "present" to the prime minister of Turkey, on July 2012 on the ruling political party's general congress in Van. This time the photo of Yunus, as the young dead symbol of an earthquake, was framed in golden fabric and became a gift to be exchanged between politicians in public ceremonies. Furthermore, the politicians were posing for the cameras while exchanging Yunus's picture in a self-confident somewhat arrogant manner. This time, Yunus's face was reframed and re-circulated in a staged political context, and he had become a dead icon symbol of the earthquake. His photograph

became the material that represented the most memorable moment of the disaster; it also became the mark and the aesthetic object to embellish the walls of politicians' offices.

This thesis is about the production and circulation of Yunus Geray's photograph and the web of relations through which it reaches us. I approach his image as material that is both constituted by and constituent of complex web of relations. From the beginning when I had neither my methodology, nor my theoretical tools I was immensely curious to discover how one becomes a disaster symbol and where does this fame lead. When I saw Yunus's photograph in golden frames used as a gift in political ceremonies I was deliberately inquisitive and wanted to trace back how the journey of the photograph ended up there. Azoulay (2008), in *Civil Contract of Photography*, suggests photographs invite us to acknowledge a civil responsibility of seeing and being seen, a civil contract between the viewer and the scene photographed. My encounter with Yunus's photograph was the initial spark of this thesis. Furthermore, me as the viewer, him as the observed, and alongside the photograph as the primary material are all trapped in this encounter. For a while, we have both been captured as the objects and the subjects of this encounter within a circular process. I tried to listen to my "inward calling"⁵, to formulate how to represent and produce knowledge about this experience. Yet here in this thesis, his photograph recirculates, acquires new meanings based on the discussions from my perspective.

In *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Benjamin (1939), describes an angel whose face is turned toward the past, an angel who sees one single catastrophe, while a pile of debris before him grows skyward and bigger. A storm called progress

⁵ In *Science as a Vocation*, Weber (1919) suggests to researchers to listen the inner/inward calling meanwhile reminds the ethics of responsibility while researching

irresistibly pushes him into the future to which his back is turned. This thesis is an effort to research that storm from Yunus's perspective.

1.1 Disaster as a Social, Economic and Political Process

There is no such thing as natural disasters... Sounds like an overstatement but recent disaster literature (Davis, 1996; Rajan 2001; Hartman & Squires, 2006; Smith, 2006; Lewitt & Whitaker, 2009) underlines the fact that the scope of damage concerning the disasters is not limited to the catastrophic event itself but is closely linked to systematic policy choices, embedded in governmental decisions and strongly related to structural elements. Although the direct causes of disasters are in relation to the unpredictability of nature and are akin to be seen as external or uncontrollable, human made factors held before and in the aftermath of disasters are not acutely unpredictable or accidental. Literature suggests that disasters might seem random, accidental, or external, but they are social events embedded in various social processes and networks of relations. It can be claimed that, regardless of the cause of the hazard, disasters are socially made and unmade.

Focusing on famines caused by monsoons in Asia, Mike Davis (1996) makes a historical detour to the late nineteenth century. Davis discusses the connection between famines and the formation of today's Third World countries. Davis suggests that millions died because of famine, which seemed to fit with rhetoric of disaster coming from nature (monsoons and drought). Whereas he clearly shows how famines or mass starvation was actually "organized" and are connected to certain policy choices (Davis, 1996, pp.47-50). He argues that famines are integral parts of development of capitalist modernity, where the nature and the market, namely weather and price perturbations were connected in the same equations all around the

world. Therefore, Davis (1996) shows how the origins of the Third World had been put in place and “humanity had been irrevocably divided” hidden behind the natural disaster rhetoric (p.56).

Underlining the social aspects of disasters, Neil Smith (2006) contributes to disaster literature with a similar perspective, by claiming that there is no such thing as a natural disaster. In his article, Smith focuses on the disasters caused by nature, where he argues, natural dimension of the disasters become an “ideological camouflage” of the social dimensions (Smith, 2006, p.1). He shows how vulnerability and preparation measures are neglected at certain areas systematically. Meanwhile he highlights the class and race discrimination during the aftermath of disasters. He argues that disasters may deepen the social differences in a society and lead to “classquakes”, in which not the direct physical event, but the aftermath may have fatal or hazardous consequences on certain underprivileged populations. He also emphasizes the motives of capital investors and military cordons after the disasters that do not protect directly the victims of the incident, but interests of the capital, governments or major corporations (Smith, 2006, pp.3-4).

Similarly, focusing on various aspects of environmental violence taking place during and in the aftermath of 1984 Bhopal gas disaster; Rajan (2001) examines environmental violence as a social phenomenon that contains five interactive dimensions. These are namely technological, corporate, distributive, bureaucratic and discursive. Borrowing from Perrow (1984), Rajan’s emphasis on definition of “accidents” is crucial. He underlines that “accidents” that are consequences of the characteristics of a system can be labeled as “normal” accidents, since they are inherent to a technological system and are not unpredictable, unusual or the result of an unknown cause. The author examines the systematic technological decisions, and

concludes that Bhopal was a classical example of a “normal” accident (Rajan, 2001, pp.381-383), which was caused by the inherent riskiness of technological systems. In a similar vein, it can be argued that these discussions on normal accidents had been validated again in the aftermath of Katrina storm, in New Orleans. As many suggested, the storm served to be the ideological camouflage for the human contribution to disaster, especially the systematic deficiencies of the levee system that led to floods and lethal consequences.

According to Rajan (2001), violence at corporate level takes place mostly during the public relations decisions made by private corporations. Corporations may use denial, blame the victim and lobbying strategies in order to settle the crisis. Namely each decision made has consequences for the victims of the disaster (Rajan, 2001, pp.387-388). Moreover, distributive violence is produced at the world level, when environmental risks are not equally distributed and certain populations are not equally protected. Whereas, bureaucratic violence takes place when the authenticity of claims of victims are rejected or forced to fit to official languages produced by various agents such as doctors, NGOs or government officials. Here, the violence of scientism and search for objective, evidence seeking measurable dimensions of truth and pain may lead to more violence towards the victims (pp.389-391). Finally, Rajan (2001) focuses on discursive levels of violence, which he argues, also have material manifestations. Victim organizations speaking on behalf of real victims, media or NGOs, may appropriate the pain and voice of the victims and contribute to reproduction of a violent rhetoric (p. 396). His categories of violence are relevant to discuss catastrophic events whether caused by nature or man-made.

In their collection book, *Hurricane Katrina: America's Unnatural Disaster* Levitt and Whitaker (2009) focus on America's unnatural disaster Katrina. They

show the systematic and structural failures made in various areas such as the court system, the health care system, property systems, levee systems, economic redistribution of resources, and news making processes alongside the environmental injustices, which were ultimately about the choices made, and were not absolute. The writers suggest that a critical examination of the social, political, economic and legal decisions made during and aftermath of the Katrina storm are inexorably linked to inequalities based on race, class, and gender.

Focusing on the genealogy of the word progress Koselleck (2002) underlines that, since the 18th century, it is widely held that “progress is general and constant, while every regression, decline or decay occurs only partially and temporarily” (Koselleck, 2002, p.227). It can be argued that approaching disasters and catastrophes as one-time, singular, or temporary events that coming from nature benefits from progress discourse that dissociates human contribution to disasters, and purely emphasizes nature’s involvement in the event. Thereby, the disaster discourse is purified from the man-made aspects and from the pervasive human colonization of nature with progress. Therefore I assume that by firstly acknowledging man-made aspects of disasters, then framing them become crucial scrutiny within the discourse of self-evident progress, continuous development and entanglement of all forms of nature and culture. It can be argued that catastrophes can be imagined, as what Rajan calls “normal accidents” or Koselleck puts as something “that comes with progress”. Since progress and development are unquestionable self-evident constructs, human contribution to disasters and catastrophes turn out to be normalized, or invisible, while nature’s contribution might be over emphasized.

I problematize the representation of disasters in a sense that whether it produces a “nature strikes back” discourse accompanied with fear, powerlessness or

acknowledges entangled human contribution to them. Žižek (2008) questions what was defined as the real catastrophe. The natural catastrophe, the hurricane revealed itself to be “socially mediated in multiple ways”, because the actual hazard, namely the storm missed the city about twenty-five miles and only ten people were reported dead initially until the levee system of the city broke down (Žižek, 2008, p. 94). In a way rather than the unpreparedness at various levels, the emphasis switched to both wild nature of human beings (looters) and to ideological camouflage of storm (nature) causing the chaos.

As discussed in brief, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, famines, droughts or other environmental catastrophes might seem random, external, accidental or unpredictable. However as recent literature implies, the natural dimensions of these catastrophes often serve as the ideological camouflage for human contribution to these disasters. As Holm (2012) suggests, hazard is defined as the agent hitting society from outside, such as a hurricane, whereas vulnerability is defined as the human society’s own contribution to the disaster in terms of its severity and duration. Finally, a disaster contains dimensions of both the non-human (hazard) and human (vulnerability). Holm (2012) argues that after the Hurricane Katrina, there had been a paradigm shift in contemporary disaster research towards the vulnerability perspective (pp.16-17). In this thesis, I approach disasters as unnatural, which consequently internalize the vulnerability perspective and the human contribution to disasters, while aim at tracing the “classquakes” and the formation of violence at discursive level.

1.2 The Van earthquake, facts and figures

It was not the earthquake, but the buildings that caused the most damage. Many buildings were severely damaged in the area both during the earthquake and after the major shocks. The Van environmental area is renowned for having very harsh winter conditions. Therefore housing and sheltering problems became a major problem during the aftermath of disaster. Initially massive tent areas were constructed which are followed by huge container towns that were established to provide housing for the victims.

According to AFAD Report (2014), in Van and Erciř, 13 tent towns were built and approximately 25.000 victims accommodated in them. Three months after the disaster all tent cities were closed and nearly 30.000 containers were bought (that cost 42 million TL) in order to accommodate approximately 175.000 citizens.⁶ The report indicates that the basic needs such as electricity or water were provided free to the residents of container cities, and the electric bills of citizens in tent and container cities, a totaled approximate amount of 150 million TL was paid by AFAD. The report adds that the total cost of the earthquake was 4.824.185.024 TL and more than half of it was transferred to the Housing Development Administration and Financial Aid for Reconstruction⁷. The emphasis on finances spent is an indicator of the situation that the major problem in the area was related to sheltering and housing in the aftermath of the disaster.

Initial state-centered damage assessment processes were followed by massive demolition and construction projects. The AFAD report (2014) declares that in four months period, over a thousand architects and construction engineers from diverse

⁶ AFAD Report, 2014, Executive Summary, retrieved from: www.afad.gov.tr

⁷ 2.362 million TL to Housing Development and 254 million TL to Financial Aid for Reconstruction, AFAD Report, 2014, Retrieved May 2017, from: <https://www.afad.gov.tr/en/2608/Appropriations-Expenditures-Campaigns>

public institutions successfully assessed the damage of 187.000 buildings in the region and determined that 49.000 buildings are highly damaged. Only 23% of all buildings in the region are assessed as non-damaged. But the assessment process itself became bureaucratically and discursively violent at various levels. Working on the Van Earthquake Schafers (2015) underlines the fact that the damage assessment process avoided providing the necessary information on the way buildings might behave in the case of potential aftershocks. As stated earlier, there had been thousands of aftershocks in the region. Schafers (2015) demonstrates how unpredictability of future and incalculability of natural events discourses being selected as one of the hotels reported to be “lightly damaged” collapsed in a major aftershock that caused the death of 39 people. The state’s refusal to make any official statement about future risks, made the Turkish state authorities to reject any claims of responsibility for the potential effects of the knowledge they were producing and distributing. Besides, the writer shows us how the damage reports became objects of mistrust when ten employees of the commission were investigated for manipulating damage reports in exchange of bribes (pp. 12-17). According to *Gündem Çocuk* Report on the earthquake, out of 72.242 highly damaged buildings, only 20.500 were demolished in the following three years of the earthquake, therefore, many families continued to reside in highly or moderately damaged buildings.

It was not the earthquake, but poverty that caused the long lasting damage to the region. The city was already impoverished and economically deprivation before the incident, and conditions were greatly aggravated after the earthquake (Eraydın 2016; Schafers, 2015). According to TUIK figures (2013) the gross value added per

capita in Van is the lowest compared to the whole country⁸. Figures of education, employment or life expectancy for the city of Van are considerably lower than the country's general average levels (TUIK, 2013, pp. 7-55). In the first four months following the earthquake, 13.000 people migrated from the city (TUIK, 2013). This number has increased to 72.000 people in total⁹.

Problems of temporary housing camps continued for months and even years. Because 83,9% of the tents initially delivered to region were summer tents,¹⁰ heating became a major problem. Many tents burned down in the camps due to crude heating solutions. Container towns had their unique problems as well. It is stated that the population of one container area might rise up to 7-8 people and sharing limited space in the container areas lasted for years. Moreover children had to attend schools nearby the container towns because their parents were mostly unemployed, or were unable to generate adequate income to provide them with more qualified education opportunities. Public housing was delivered to rightful owners who could prove legally that their houses were severely damaged. Moreover, hundreds of families were not acknowledged as the rightful owners and could not gain the right to move to the accommodation. When the container towns were shut down, the victims that were forced out of the container towns had nowhere to go and consequently started a hunger strike in late summer 2013.

It should be kept in mind that the discourse of the state generated reports continually renounce and reiterate how much the earthquake cost in terms of electricity bills, construction and demolition numerically as if to emphasize the

⁸ In TUIK figures, Turkey is analysed as 26 regions and Van's region (Van, Bitlis, Muş, Hakkari TRB2) has the lowest figures for gross value added per person (3515 dollars in TRB2 vs 9244 dollars TR avr.)

⁹ Retrieved May 2017, from: <http://www.cnnturk.com/haber/turkiye/2011-depremi-van-nufusunu-azaltti>

¹⁰ DAKA Van Depremi Raporu, retrieved May 2017, from: <http://www.daka.org.tr/panel/files/files/arsiv/Arastirmalar%20ve%20Analizler/Van%20Depremi%20SEPD%20Tesbiti%20Raporu.pdf>

“helping to reconstruct Van” is burden on the state. It can be argued that through the damage assessment and housing processes the neoliberal logic of self-care of citizens (Brown, 2006; Harvey, 2005) has been reproduced. In addition, electricity, damage assessment reports, water facilities proved costly and became a force to act upon the victims. In *Critical Events*, Veena Das (1995) states that despite the “pervasive uncertainty which surrounds disasters, bureaucratic decisions are represented as if they were grounded in certainty” (Das, 1995, p.142) and modern institutions of bureaucracy, law and medicine might legitimize the producer of the discourse rather than the victim’s unique experience of suffering (p.139). It can be claimed that Das’s were proved correct in the state reports after the Van Earthquake. On the other hand, Ziarek (2012) underlines that hunger strikes are corporeal challenges to discursive practices of power and an intervention to politics (Ziarek 2012, pp.160-163). Therefore, the resignation of bare life after an earthquake should be kept in mind to understand the conditions of some victims and as a collective protest to the bureaucratic and discursive practices of violence in the aftermath of the disaster.

1.3 Representational concerns: Disasters as cultural formations

How big the scope of the hazard is, catastrophic events do not necessarily lead to a critical inquiry of the existing knowledge and power structures. Are catastrophic events crises in the established representational regimes, or in what ways catastrophes break with the limits of the sayable and seeable? Ranciere (2010) states, a symbolic event, is the name of any event that strikes a blow in the existing regime of relations between the symbolic and the real. For instance, 9/11 is not a symbolic rupture for Ranciere, because there was no “revelation of a gap between the real of

American life and the symbolic of American people”. On the contrary, to him, after 9/11 hegemonic modes of symbolization had solidified (Ranciere, 2010, p.99).

Representations shape the cultural life of disasters; they determine its level of crisis, become a manuscript for what is to be done in the aftermath, reproduce certain narratives or genres meanwhile contribute formation of them. Nünning (2012) focuses on the metaphors that shape the cultural life of crises and catastrophes. He shows that the discourses of media and metaphors have the power to turn any event, situation or cultural change into a severe crisis or even a catastrophe (Nünning, 2012, p.60). Nünning (2012) argues that catastrophic rhetoric define what people consider a crisis or catastrophe in the first place. He argues that an occurrence becomes an event, then becomes a story, finally becomes a certain kind of story or a plot pattern, namely a catastrophe narrative (p.83).

In a similar vein, in his article titled “The Cultural Analysis of Disasters” Holm (2012), underlines that disasters are media-borne because they are culturally framed, mediated, filtered through society’s collective repertoire of metaphors, images, narratives (Holm, 2012, pp.17-19). Holm also argues that the cultural view of disasters are “constitutive”, which have material effects and consequences on the society. He states that disaster images not only represent disasters, but also themselves produce disasters, and function as a “script for the social practices before, during and after disasters” (p.23). He argues that cultural imagination of disasters in the Western world mostly appeal to the sublime (pain and pleasure aspects), to the trauma, to the state of emergency, to risk, imbalance or sustainability, to apocalypse, or to theodicy (pp.24-26).

Similarly, Kooijman focuses on the cultural life of 9/11, and emphasizes the “spectacular effect” of 9/11 and how it became a live “global reality show”.

Furthermore he suggests that some media events function as a “flashbulb memory” and 9/11 is one of them similar to other television events like Kennedy murder, or the Challenger disaster (Kooijman, 2012, p.178). The writer suggests that in representation of 9/11; first person narrative point of view, familiarization and personal identification with the victims helped publicly to vilify the persecutors. Meanwhile this sentimental zone eliminated making any comments on the political context of the event. Therefore, he underlines that American suffering and trauma is individualized and personalized in such a way that “it becomes widely, even globally, accessible as a universal human experience” (p.180). Therefore the writer suggests that the American values of freedom and democracy remain recognized as self-evident, while the military and political actions performed by the state turn out to be unquestioned (p.184).

Likewise, Gonçalves (2012) discusses the “non-singularity” of disastrous events in history and looks for the connection and continuity between their representations. Gonçalves also focuses on the cultural life of 9/11 and she argues that the coverage of 9/11 contains elements from the other disastrous events in history, namely the sinking of Titanic, Pearl Harbor, atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the Challenger disaster and the Oklahoma City bombing. She argues that even though these catastrophes differ in terms of their socio-political frames; they share two main features, which are their “spectacularity” and “the generation of a state of exception” (Gonçalves, 2012, p.214). According to the writer, all these disasters are also media events and have become even journalistic templates. She concludes that, 9/11 is a non-singular event which is connected to preceding events in forming a structure of response, meanwhile is also connected to the future representations,

where the elements of the event are appropriated and remediated in many media forms.

On the other hand, Joye (2009) researches the hierarchies among the representations of disastrous events. In his article on global suffering, Joye compares numerous instances of sufferings where he concludes disasters are not considered to be equal neither by media in terms of newsworthiness or by spectators in terms of engagement, empathy or involvement. He concludes that western news media discursively reproduce a certain kind of Euro-American centered world order and socio-cultural differences are reproduced that divides the world to zones of poverty and prosperity, or danger and safety via disasters (Joye, 2009, pp.57-58).

When we focus on the visual representation of disasters some genres are quickly recognized. Sylvester (2008) focuses on production of news in the aftermath of Katrina where she collects various interviews made with media reporters, photographers, editors, broadcasters, and support center volunteers to understand the choices made right after the disastrous event, especially the first days when the scope of the damage was unclear. In the section of photographers, Sylvester (2008) makes interviews with Pulitzer winner photographers by their Katrina photographs. Most of them indicate that the pictures on humanity, unconditional love, emotion and hope, as well as showing despair, indicating that “there is a lot work to be done” were the most appealed photographs. In general, photographers state that “storytelling frames” focus on people or human interests had turned out to be the acknowledged photos after the disaster.

The visual frames of disasters might promote pain and compassion, meanwhile, some might promote a fear of chaos and Hobbesian state of nature. Respectively, Zizek (2008) underlines that the representation of Katrina victims in a

state of “primitive wilderness” helped to strengthen the belief that human nature is naturally evil, or reproduced the fear that it is ruthlessly egoist, and that’s why “descent into social chaos is a permanent threat”. To him, this fear and representation legitimize various actions in the aftermath of the storm. Zizek states;

For a few days, New Orleans apparently regressed to a wild preserve of looting, killing and rape. It became the city of the dead and dying, a post-apocalyptic zone where those the philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls *Homini sacer*- people excluded from the civil order- wander. (Zizek, 2008 p.93)

As briefly discussed, different catastrophes are constructed upon different rhetorics of catastrophe. A quick overview on the catastrophic events that had happened in Turkey would be helpful to map the aesthetic-political regime of disasters and the limits of the sayable and visible in Turkey. Besides the Van earthquake, in the last few years some significant and devastating catastrophic events took place in Turkey. On December 2011, 34 Kurdish citizens were bombed and killed by the unmanned aerial vehicles of the Turkish Air Force in Uludere (Roboski), Şırnak. Later in May 2013, two bombs exploded in Reyhanlı, Hatay province, and 53 people died according to official reports. In May 2014, 301 miners died in Soma caused by an explosion at a coal mine, which burned more than 48 hours while approximately 750 miners were trapped inside the mine. Although none are directly “natural” disasters like the Van earthquake, all of these incidents created both the objective and the discursive dimensions of catastrophization process while creating their own evils and calling for humanitarian emergencies at different levels.

For instance in Uludere (2011), the mainstream discourse focused on the “smuggling” activities of the victims rather than their “citizenship” and the media representations focused on a disembodiment digitalized military aesthetics where the main discussion turned around explaining the system and logic of unmanned aerial vehicles. It was an event to break with the limits of the sayable and seeable, but its

visibility is invited to a narrative of conspiracy and war. Even the prime minister's wife visited Uludere to visit victims's families. In a way, the explicit contradiction of a state vehicle killing its citizens is slightly pushed to the zone of pain and suffering that mothers share against an unknown source of evil that kills innocent children. Similarly, in Reyhanlı (2013), the media avoided giving any explanations for the cause of the event; rather an unknown speculative source of power is blamed and cursed while the matter is not discussed thoroughly. Both cases adhered to the discourse of war and conspiracy, while an unknown unnoticeable evil was created to curse the occurrence in question. Later, coverage of public bomb explosions in the mainstream media is banned by the government of the Turkish Republic, examples of which are explosions that in Ankara (2015), Diyarbakır (2015) and in Suruç (2015)¹¹.

On the other hand, the Soma (2014) disaster gained huge public attention. Knowing that over 750 miners were trapped in the mine waiting to be rescued, the area turned to a chaotic disaster zone. There was great pain and trauma in the villages and towns around Soma, families were trying to find their dead relatives and vast spaces for mass graves were prepared, while politicians were visiting and giving public speeches. On one hand broadcast live news and forums were taking place, on the other, protests and various forms of tensions were rising. The news broadcasts as well as the forums were inviting the noisy voices to the genre of drama, to hear more and more of pain, poverty and suffering while providing charitable options. Most of the time, and time again, the miners were asked to relate their painful traumatic experiences about the accident or asked about their life stories on how they ended up

¹¹ Since Reyhanlı, with a claim of confidentiality of the investigations, media coverage of the events is banned in mainstream media. Retrieved in May 2017, from http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/03/160318_yayin_yasaklari

working in mines. The miners were portrayed as bread earners with dignity, whereas “poverty” and “destiny” are addressed as the evil.

As it can be seen disasters are constructed upon different rhetorics, create their own distinct evils or villains while occupy the media’s attention at different levels with different visual appeals. The more the event becomes inexplicable or risky to the hegemonic modes of the symbolic or knowledge regimes, the more pronounced is the probability of banning or shaping the event’s media coverage. On the other hand, when the events are connected to natural causes, or on divine foundations, the higher the probability of their visibility. Nonetheless, their visibility is risky, full of incompatible elements and ambivalences to cover the human contribution to disasters. Furthermore, it is possible to categorize and classify the disasters or catastrophes among themselves, and also highlight hierarchies among them in terms of media occupancy. Although all represent human suffering and are based on loss of human life, as Butler (2009) states some lives are acknowledged as more grievable and some disasters are more proximate, representable or visible.

In this vein, I approach these disasters as social constructs that are socially made and unmade. In this construct, distant communities or victims are imagined and labeled with different characteristics; also different truth effects and affects are produced along, with different assumed audience reactions and mobilizations. Photography as a medium is renowned for its capacity to represent truth and reality objectively; it has the potential to solidify the truth and its therein claims.

The selected event for this thesis, the Van earthquake, as a “natural” disaster stands relatively “neutral” and apolitical compared to the political and structural dimensions of other man-made catastrophes. To me, purification in Latourian sense or a clear-cut separation of natural hazards from man-made disasters opens up a gap

that is full of irreconcilable elements and ambivalences. Furthermore, the earthquake happened before media bans in Turkey became a norm, so the representation of the earthquake contains various clashes of discourses. Therefore I assume that in this thesis the unnoticed side of the sovereign, the state, media discourse on disasters and the mechanisms of covert violence inherent to them will be discovered through the gaps, ambivalences and contradictions detailed herein. I will trace the naturalization effects within the power structures and multitier hierarchies while endorsing how visual regimes create their own truth effects. Furthermore, I will analyze how an earthquake in a Kurdish area as an event, unsettled the existing regimes of the sayable meanwhile initiating the formation of new discourses such as New Disaster Legislation¹², or embedded in political discourses such as the Peace Process which was not yet official but in progress.

In sum, catastrophic events and disasters are embedded on social, cultural, economic and political processes at various levels. And the modern way of thought purifies catastrophic events as being unexpected and accidental, and the blame may be put solely on either the hazardous nature, or to the primitive wild nature of human beings, or divine ends. Furthermore, the representation and discourse of disasters are both shaped by culture and are in turn shaping the culture and actions. These sometimes might become overall more catastrophic, thereby the event itself. Various representations have the power to construct what the event is, or can turn out to be a force shaping how it should be approached in the aftermath. Moreover, representations of disasters both benefit from certain genres or myths, and also contribute to formation of them.

¹² The new Disaster Legislation “Yeni Afet Yasası” (May 2012) came into force for reconstructing high risky neighbourhoods that are susceptible to earthquakes, but application of the legislation is highly criticized because it is claimed that it prioritizes gentrification rather than vulnerability.

1.4 The aesthetics/visuality approach and organization of the thesis

The production of sensual regimes and their naturalization effects on power relations, spatial arrangements, sensual hierarchies or visual and discursive formations that create their own truth effects; are the primary problematics of aesthetics turn discussions. Here the focus shifts from representation and ideology to the affective realm, with the assumption that the sensual presentations gain their relative autonomy as a force to act upon the world with material effects. The aesthetic experience can be examined through the spaces, emotions, affects or visual materials to distinguish the intelligible, sayable, or visible and not.

Within this perspective, I embraced Ranciere's conceptualizations on aesthetics, consensus, and the distribution of the sensible to problematize my approach in this thesis. Ranciere (2010) argues that aesthetics is inherently political and politics are inherently aesthetic. To clarify his argument, he defines his main concepts of police (policy) and politics. Police is the distribution of the sensible in which spaces, functions, emotions and senses are regulated and hierarchized. In a way police is a totalizing arena of consensus. But the main deficiency of the police is the absence of the supplement of demos (people). The police regulates the shared common, the sensory experience, what is visible, what can be heard and what cannot (Ranciere, 2010, p. 36). Whereas politics is including the void created by the policy, it is "an intervention in the visible and the sayable" (p. 37). Therefore the essence of politics is the manifestation of dissensus.

Dissensus is the manifestation of a gap in the sensible itself. It is a "clash between two partitions of the sensible, is the construction of a paradoxical world that puts together two different separate worlds, is a division inserted to the common sense, a dispute over what is presented" (Ranciere, 2010, p. 69). The ones separated

from public life to domestic space are left alone and expected to express suffering, hunger, anger or complaints rather than actual speech. This makes their voice as mere noise (Ranciere, 2010, pp.38-39). Seeing people's voice as noise causes politics to be reduced to policy, rather a political subject is a capacity for staging scenes of dissensus (p. 69).

Ranciere (2010) argues that the superpowers and advocates of democracy are the states that master their democratic disorder best. These are also the countries that define good and bad democracies based on the criteria of citizenship, universality of law, education, affirmative action or multiculturalism (pp. 47-48). Ranciere (2004) claims that democracy is not the power of the self over the other, but is the disruption of such power. Democracy itself is defined by "irregular acts of political subjectivization" that redistributes communal distribution of the sensible (Ranciere 2004, p.3). When the aesthetic sphere is defined separately as a way of taste on art, the aesthetic experiences are put out of discussion. On the contrary, for Ranciere aesthetic regime has the potential to put the entire system of norms into question that are produced by the ethical regime and representative regime (Ranciere, 2004, p.4). Ranciere puts the relation between symbolic (aesthetic) regime and politics as follows:

There are two major ways of symbolizing the community: One represents it as the sum of its parts, the other defines it as the vision of its whole. One conceives it as the accomplishment of a common way of being, the other as a polemic over the common. I call the first police, the second politics. Consensus is the form by which politics is transformed into the police. (Ranciere, 2010, p.100)

Ranciere (2004) states that it is not a matter of claiming everything is fiction or not, but to connect "the presentation of facts and forms of intelligibility" that are blurring the border between the "logic of facts and the logic of fiction". Therefore he suggests that the forms of knowledge, politics and art "construct fictions, that is to say

material rearrangements of signs and images, relationship between what is seen and what is said, between what is done and what can be done” (pp.38-39).

Ranciere’s distribution of the sensible, aesthetics, politics, noise, dissensus are theoretically helpful to problematize my research aims, to see how disasters as events are hierarchized and culturally shaped. However these theoretical tools do not directly address the material areas to examine. Since I engage in the economy of a single photograph, I acquired help from Bourdieu’s concept of field and habitus, especially analyzing the interview with the experienced photojournalist to see how he values the choices and practices in the given position in the field of journalism. Furthermore, Sekula’s (1986) works on archives is critical to discuss how pictures are atomized and isolated in terms of their artistic qualifications, and how they are homogenized, classified, or categorized for taxonomic ordering.

In order to investigate the effects of visual materials, I engaged in Sara Ahmed’s (2014) work on cultural politics of emotions, to see how certain affects mitigate certain mobilizations in the disaster news economy, particularly affects of pain and compassion. Also imagining “distant suffering” literature helped me to focus on how to study such theoretical premises specifically in the media and imagery production field. Chouliaraki (2004, 2006) and Boltanski’s (1999) theoretical framework on “distant suffering” and “politics of pity” contest construction of morality at different levels. Chouliaraki argues that each event, or different news on the same event, creates its own certain “proximity” and “sensitivity” levels towards the suffering. I tried to apply the categories suggested by Boltanski (1999)- sentimental zone, denunciation, and the sublime- and Chouliaraki (2004, 2006) while analyzing the textual and visual material in the discourse analysis section.

In addition, since I problematize the power relations inherent to framing, visibility and discourses, and violence produced along, I acquired help from Butler's reflection on framing and violence, as well as Feldman's work on visibility, gaze and scopic regimes. Violence inherent to framing is one of the features I problematize in this thesis. In *Frames of War* Butler (2009) underlines that framing is politically saturated and to her the delimited sphere of appearance are operations of power leading to different modalities of violence. Butler argues that recognizability, intelligibility, apprehension, the mode of knowing are historically articulated therefore recognizability precedes recognition (pp.5-6). Moreover, the concept of "sensing and perceiving" which are not recognized by recognition and mechanisms of power through which life is produced are the areas of critical thinking.

Since I focus on imagery production and circulation, Feldman's (2006) work on scopic regimes and visibility are analytically useful. Feldman states that scopic regime is "an ensemble of practices and discourses that establish the truth claims, typicality and credibility of visual acts and objects and politically correct modes of seeing" (p. 429). Furthermore, there is no original or literal eye of the scopic regime, but there lies a core of blindness, a gaze, which is mechanics of power and blind to itself. Feldman underlines that visual regimes have deadly materiality and violence is inherent to the discourse that creates politically visible and politically unseen (pp. 433-434).

As briefly discussed, sensibility, recognizability, framing, objectivity claims of photography and aesthetic experience are internal to politics and are capable of producing violence. Mitchell (2005) emphasizes that visual culture entails a consideration on "the blindness, the invisible, the unseeable, and the overlooked" (Mitchell, 2005, p.343). Therefore I aim to focus on the gaps in the facts, cracks that

are covered, and fictions to see what is made visible and what is rendered invisible, and the affects and effect of this in/visibility.

In this introductory chapter I provide the theoretical background of my research and the political, economical context in which the Van Earthquake occurred. In summary, I approach disasters as social constructs that are both shaped by culture and in turn help shape the cultural norms on a simultaneous basis. Furthermore, this thesis internalizes the vulnerability perspective that prioritizes the analysis of human contribution to disasters in order to scrutinize the belief that approaches disasters and decays as temporary and partial. My main focus is on the representation of the earthquake and production of visual materials within this perspective. I aim to trace the trajectory of one photograph in order to dismantle the seemingly consistent consensual blocks, to search for the absent/presents, the overlooked and the in/visible. As Arjun Appadurai (1986) proposes; the things themselves are inscribed in their forms, their uses and their trajectories. He continues:

It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things. Thus even though from a theoretical point of view, actors encode things with significance, from a methodological point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context. (Appadurai, 1986 p.5)

The production and circulation of Yunus's photograph, its framing all over newspapers, the close-up of his look edited with dramatic music themes and special emotive effects in prime time news, the naming of a young boy waiting to be rescued under the ruins "icon", and the photo as a borrowed symbol in political ceremonies, all triggered my curiosity to follow the route this photograph travelled. Meanwhile this reveals and leads to discussions around the discourses and relations it is embedded in. Throughout this journey, I aim to highlight the social and human

context in which it is used, and the politics that links “value and exchange” (Appadurai, 1986, p.57) of this image as a thing.

This thesis mainly follows the material route of Yunus’s photograph to examine the “web of relations”¹³ in which it has been embedded. It also tackles how a victim becomes the iconic symbol of a catastrophic event, also scrutinizes how one becomes extraordinarily visible and idealized, while others are not seen or heard. This journey is an attempt to answer questions such as; what are the effects of this visibility, what are the limits of the sayable, through which discourses truth effects are solidified, and which regimes of truths are risked? I lay emphasis on how the contradictions, ambivalences and the “mere noises of the dissensus” (Ranciere, 2010) after a critical incident have been invited to the language of consensus.

Throughout this thesis I searched for the answers to questions such as; how is an ideal earthquake victim constructed and immortalized? What are the effects produced and how do they act upon to the power structures? What is the visuality regime, or visual genesis from which this photograph speaks, how was it formed, or are there counter-visualities that risk its formation? Therefore, in the main parts of this research, I mainly problematize the initial imagery production, news production and the mainstream newspaper discourse in the following week of the disaster. My aims are to deal with the processes of framing, claims of objectivity and truth integral to photographic representation, formation of realist gazes, limits of the sayable, distribution of the sensible and formation of the consensual discourses and contradictions produced along them. As Ziarek (2012) states, matter and form are both aesthetic and political categories. Without subordinating aesthetics, either to depoliticized experience or to be used as instrumental political ends (p.172), I engage

¹³ The concept is borrowed from Simmel (1907). For a discussion on money, he focuses on micro level fluid moments to map the web of relations that money travels.

with the form, the matter and the production of meaning to reveal “the conflicting but inseparable relation between the universal and the particular, the intelligible and the sensible” (Ziarek, 2012, p.189).

Within this framework, my broader aim is to capture the processes behind the formation of consensual areas while trace the dissensual performances (Ranciere, 2010), singularity of pains and their effects in the aesthetic regime of catastrophe in Turkey. Therefore, I suggest that visual and aesthetic regime is a field of struggle, has a dynamic nature with its mere noises and consensual realms.

In the following chapter, I will discuss how an “iconic” disaster image is produced. The chapter is based on the semi structured in-depth interview with the photojournalist who took Yunus Geray’s photograph on the night of the disaster. Here, I open up a discussion on the labor and processes behind the production of news photographs. Throughout our conversation the concepts such as photographs as aesthetic objects, objectivity and realism claims, categorization and classification of photographs, and hierarchies among catastrophic or critical events will be thoroughly discussed. This chapter is useful to see how and when the visual and the political are separated and connected, how a realist/objective gaze is constructed and what are the blind points of that gaze, or which certain events are sensed to be more critical than the others, whereas, how events and photographs are hierarchized, classified, or taxonomized.

In Chapter 3, I conduct a discourse analysis based on the archival data from mainstream national newspapers where I locate the photograph in the disaster discourse it is embedded. I analyze the mainstream newspapers for one-week period after the earthquake to examine the clash of discourses that have been intense after the event. There I apply the categories Rose (2001) proposes in *Visual*

Methodologies to understand the power relations that constitute social difference through analysis of keywords, key themes, recurring images, clusters as well as hints for gaps, silences, contradictions and absently present themes in the news texts.

Finally I discuss the photograph's circulation in new spatio-temporalities. Here I discuss how non-newsmakers recirculate the image for their use. I examine the photograph's usage in outdoor campaigns, in political ceremonies, in award ceremonies (the photographer won the "photo of the year award") and finally returning back to Yunus's family as a present. Here my major focus is on the politics of posing, posturing, staging and the effects of humanitarian discourse on the real victims.

In *Right to Look*, Mirzoeff (2011) claims that visibility sutures authority to power and renders this association natural. Visibility is the supplement to make authority self-evident, it is "making of the processes of history perceptible to authority". To him we have to think with and against visibility because visibility itself is war, the clashes of visualities and counter-visualities put the real, *realistic* and realism at stake in all senses. Therefore, right to look is "the claim to a right to the real" and the ability to detect the crisis in visibility is crucial for both critical thinking and the possibility of the right to look (pp.3-26). This research aims to investigate how a disaster victim image is produced, how it is circulated and re-circulated in the economy of visual production in Turkey, and through which discourses it is rendered normal, real and sensible. My attempt is to follow the trajectory of a photograph to reveal the *economy of relations* in which it is embedded.

CHAPTER 2

PRODUCTION OF YUNUS'S PHOTOGRAPH

This chapter's key emphasis is on the production of Yunus Geray's photograph. In order to discuss the issue, an in-depth interview is conducted with the Reuters photojournalist who shot the photograph in the very first night of the disastrous event. This interview helps to comprehend the very initial stage, the making of an image in the news economy. In the following sections I will engage how the commodification process of a photograph starts at the very moment of shooting through a visibility/materiality perspective.

2.1 The visibility/materiality perspective

Rose and Tolia-Kelly (2012) underline that rather than the idealist account of cultural turn with its focus on language, text or signification; the material turn in visibility emphasizes the integration of politics and materiality into the visual materials (p.1-2). They propose to "re-materialize" the visual realm based on the argument that "politics of *doing* the visual are as material as matter". The authors suggest studying the processes of representation beyond purely culturalist perspective and propose an embodied, material, combined and politically charged reconceptualization of visibility (pp.2-3). Rose and Tolia-Kelly (2012) state;

Visibility/Materiality is an emergent orientation of research practice that is inevitably critical and constantly reflexive of the power play between representation, text, practice, technologies of production, display, and performance. The legacy of materialism within cultural theory is extended, enlivened and made meaningful through an approach that recognizes a world of more than signification through text, narrative, line and object. (p.3)

Furthermore, Rose and Tolia-Kelly (2012) recommend approaching the visual and the material in continual dialogue and co-constitution. This process of co-constitution of visibility and materiality as a dynamic process is situated within networks, hierarchies, and discourses of power as they name this interactive totality the “ecologies of the visual”. Questions based on mediation, production and consumption are linked to critical reflection on effects, histories, interpretation, genres, audience reception, production processes, objectivity and representation as truth (Rose & Tolia-Kelly, 2012, p.4).

In a similar vein, in their famous book *Reading National Geographic*, Lutz and Collins (1993) focus on extensive examination of the *National Geographic* magazine photos in order to show how apparently apolitical, objective, scientific and neutral pictures and captions are following systematic sequences and forming cultural artifacts that clearly reflect a certain political point of view. They summarize the *processes* by which the images are formed, selected, controlled, purveyed and read. They argue that although there are studies that focus solely on either the production site or the reading of images in relation to its historical context or reader/consumer response to cultural artifacts, they claim to examine and combine these three phases as a whole process (pp.12-13).

In their examination of the process of producing images of the non-western world, Lutz and Collins (1993) focus on the decisions made by photographers, editors, designers and caption writers to show how the standards of objectivity, science, education, aesthetics and realism are negotiated and set at each level. Here the editors and photographers claim to choose realist frameworks that contain a certain universal element of human interest. These frames seem to show the world out there objectively and in a balanced manner. Lutz and Collins (1993) argue that

the myths of civilization, progress and social evolutionism are reproduced based on an ahistoric representation of the exotic and foreign (p.23).

Moreover, according to Lutz and Collins (1993), the *National Geographic* magazine does not show uncomfortable images that might increase the anxiety of its readers, instead, an idealized and exotic topos free of pain and class conflict is reflected and constructed through the magazines' pages. They show how editors balance the regions of the world, make decisions on the organization of the contents and photographs. On the other hand, photographers might switch to a different discourse of art making and might attribute mystical qualifications to the success of the photographs they have taken occasionally (Lutz & Collins, 1993, p.65). Lutz and Collins (1993) show in detail the construction of the seemingly objective, apolitical, natural and realist gaze at each level of decision making.

Similarly, Gürsel (2007) in her unpublished PhD thesis¹⁴ concentrates on production, representation and circulation of news photographs, which she argues are integral to the violence and to the art of governing in the contemporary world (p.2). She problematizes the truth, representativeness, fictiveness and authenticity claims of news making while she focuses anthropologically on how international news photographs are produced, as well as how individuals get involved in production and circulation of these images in various communities (Gürsel, 2007, p.10).

After conducting extensive interviews with editors, newsmakers, journalists and photographers both in The US and France, Gürsel (2007) concludes that the realm of visual is not just a representation of violence, but can be a field of violence itself. Rather than what pictures mean, the material affects they produce in the experiential world should be investigated because they may serve as the collective

¹⁴ Gürsel, Z. (2007) *The Image Industry: The Work of International News Photographs in the Age of Digital Reproduction*, University of California, Berkeley

memory for historical justification for what happens in the world (p.222). Therefore, she concludes that photography is not only a form of representing but also a form of constructing and history-making (Gürsel, 2007, p.241).

Following these lines of arguments, it can be argued that a photograph is both a material and a visual object that is embedded in social and political processes.

Since the medium itself is widely accepted as objective, transparent with a claim of reflecting reality as it is, or at least a representation of a real circumstance, starting a discussion on examining production of a photograph from its shooting moment to its various circulation areas and following its journey as a material object has the potential to open up many discussions. These discussions are related to the violence inherent to framing, to the commodification process of a visual image, to realism it sets, to history-making as an objective and neutral tool, to truths it creates and to the political area it is strictly attached to but often covert with the medium's neutrality claims. A photograph has the potential to set norms, to contribute to make history, justify or reproduce certain hegemonic political views, create affects, normalize or de-historicize complex relationships, or set the standards of what is sensible. On the other hand as Derrida (1987) and Butler (2009) discuss, it also has the potential to break with the existing sensible regime (Butler, 2009, p.10) or something may spill off from the frame (Derrida, 1987, as cited in Cherry 2003, p. 55). Following sections will discuss the production process of the photograph of the earthquake victim through the visibility/materiality perspective elaborated above.

2.2 Production economy of Yunus's photograph

In order to investigate the process of making an image for the news economy, I have conducted an in-depth interview with the Reuters photojournalist who was on site

servicing photographs to both national and international subscribers of the agency within the hours the disastrous earthquake in Van took place. I have conducted this interview in order to see how an image is produced, with which decisions are made and the economy of relations this particular photograph is embedded in.

On the first night of the Van earthquake, Ümit Bektaş, a professional photojournalist took Yunus's photograph while he was wandering in the ruins of the city. As one of the two staff photojournalists of Reuters News Agency in Turkey, he had flown to the disaster zone right after the earthquake occurred. Bektaş underlines that Reuters News Agency has around three hundred and fifty photographers in the world and he is one of the two staff photographers in Turkey. Having the certificate to work in "hostile environments", which is a special training program to survive in warzones, disasters and the like, Bektaş states that he has worked in many political events, sieges, wars and visited over fifty countries around the world during his career. As he puts it he had "followed almost every incident in Turkey in the past 23 years". He also had worked during the 2nd Gulf War and the war in Afghanistan as an embedded journalist. Bektaş mentions that he won various awards with his photographs and adds that one of his photographs is used in the cover of the *Time* magazine.

Working as a journalist over 23 years, Bektaş underlines that his main specialization areas are elections, key political events, wars, earthquakes, disasters, outbreaks. He summarizes how Reuters News Agency splits the workload between himself and the other staff photographer of the Agency as follows; "My colleague feels comfortable to work in sports incidents, so the company mostly demands such sports photos from him. For instance he is mostly, assigned to the Olympics or the World Cup, and I go to wars, disasters and such." The first clue of his professional

tone of voice and remoteness to the objects or people he photographs, can be sensed when he talks about his specialization areas. He feels comfortable, as he puts it, working on “*patlamalar çatlamalar*” (outbreaks and ruptures) which two words rhyme phonetically in Turkish as if diminishing the meaning they carry¹⁵. Keeping in mind his successful career and experience, it can be argued that he knows the dynamics of news production and photojournalism industry. As he states that he feels “comfortable” in providing and servicing disaster and war photos, it can also be suggested that he is quite self-assured and finds himself qualified in what to service, experienced in what to shoot, or shortly, senses what “sells” in the market quickly in a professional manner.

When the conversation comes to the Van earthquake, Bektaş summarizes his encounter with the scene Yunus’s photograph was taken as follows

I flew to Erzurum as I heard the earthquake. Then I rented a car and started walking around, I saw those ruins coincidentally. There was a rescue team working on it, I shot some wreckage, some team efforts, and then someone told me that there is a boy there, thenceforth I decided to stay there until late midnight. (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 27, 2016)

Here my aim is not to judge the photographer’s choices, but rather to unfold a discussion on how professional photographers start working, how they make decisions, how they evaluate the newsworthy, what is valued as serviceable from their point of view, or how the serviced scenes are selected when there are endless options to shoot around. In our case it can be suggested that the initial tendency of a professional and experienced photographer as he gets to a disaster zone can be summarized as to shoot some wreckage, efforts of rescue teams, and finally encountering a boy under the ruins, who is still alive but might be in a critical

¹⁵ “*ondan sonra işte patlamalar, çatlamalar vesaire benim ilgi alanımdaki konular.*”, Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, 2016

situation. It would not be unexpected from a photographer to shoot the damage of the earthquake as he gets to a disaster zone. But I think, the coincidental encounter of Yunus and Mr. Bektas making him stuck there for the rest of the night deserves more elucidation. In short, I was curious to put into words what made him stop there for the rest of the night.

As our in depth interview proceeds, the photographer emphasizes that the dramatic components of a photograph can be enhanced. As Bektas puts it, components like women or children always increase the dramatic effects of photographs. Furthermore, he asks me to visualize and compare my affective reactions to imaginary photographs of a shot man, a drowned man and a drowned child in order to assure me on the topic. He asks; “what do you think, which one them has the highest dramatic component?”

Similarly, for Yunus’s photograph, he clearly underlines the fact that because the content of the photograph is a child who is about to die, the photograph has been so popular. When asked whether he sensed that his photograph would be this popular, he states;

In that picture, if there were a grown Kurdish man with thick black beards, I can not say that picture would be as popular as this one had been. But the child component, another dead body’s hand on his shoulder, his big black eyes and the look turned on the viewer. These deserve attention...the story is tragic, first he is looking at us, then the other day he is dead... I can also guess which photo will be popular and which will not... If I didn’t think it would be catchy, I would not service it to the agency. (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 27, 2016)

Moreover, Mr. Bektaş tells that components like women or children always sell in the market. He puts it as “whenever I picture women it always seeks more attention” He adds that one of his other successful photos is picturing of a crying woman, and he attributes the success of that photo to her trembling teardrop. He continues;

In another incident, recently, I serviced the picture of the woman when her teardrops were filling her eyes, not when the teardrops were falling down or when she was not crying yet. As a professional eye, I knew that a photograph of that particular moment would be successful. (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 27, 2016)

We can clearly see that Bektas knows the demands of the photograph economy and as a professional eye he both reproduces and contributes to the norms and genre expectations of that economy. He knows that the dramatic components and focusing on human factor are crucial. Yet, he works mostly in warzones or disastrous events, he prefers to focus on components like children or women to enhance the success and popularity of his photographs. He clearly assumes an audience that would not be able to stay indifferent to the affective and emotional components of his photographs. Focusing on human interest, he prefers capturing moments of suffering and pain, mostly of women and children, who are in need of compassion and help. He wants to move his audience but in a particular way. This brings us to his assumptions on the impacts of the photographs he produces.

Although he is professionally self-assured on how to increase a photograph's affective and dramatic components, he is quite cynical on the impacts the photographs produce. When asked about the effects of the photographs he takes, Bektas states that he has long before quit the idea to think that photographs might have influences on society. He adds, in years he understood that they don't solve any problem. Moreover, taking pictures of dead children or dying people like Yunus or Aylan¹⁶ has no importance at all. Because this second case, drowned baby Aylan, have similarities with Yunus, (both of the victims are children, they died, and their pictures have become very popular in various media) Bektas discusses the two cases together to clarify his point. He continues;

¹⁶ In September 2016, A three year old Syrian refugee drowned in the Aegean sea, his dead body lying on the beach is pictured and has become popular in various media

Kids are dying anyway, since these dead children's photographs are taken, kids have continued to die. It is a statistical fact, if 1500 cutters are passing the Aegean Sea a day, 20 of them are drowning, so kids are drowning every day, OK? The numbers do not change. Kids are dying anyway. (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 27, 2016)

When asked, Bektaş underlines that what photographs do on people can be deduced to clearing conscience (*vicdan aklamak*). He thinks that if we were not under a visual bombardment, we could give more serious reactions to what is happening around us. To him, what the audience does is clearing their conscience while looking at dead children's pictures. On the affects produced, Bektaş says;

We say, 'yes I am a sensitive person, and I feel sad when I look at their pictures.' Some felt sad when they saw Yunus's photograph and sent 2 SMSs to a donation campaign, some decided to send stones to Van in packages, some wealthy Kurds decided to help less privileged Kurdish earthquake victims and that's all... I don't think that construction companies changed their iron quality to build stronger buildings after they saw Yunus's dead body. This shows us that photographs can only increase social excitement. But people don't change. (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 27, 2016)

As the conversation gets deeper, Bektaş connects photographs to the political contexts they are embedded in. He underlines that photographs have impacts when the photograph suits the political climate. He thinks that Aylan's picture is serviced and made popular in order to enhance the public opinion on immigration of Syrian refugees. He states,

Aylan's picture became meaningful in that conjuncture. Kids were dying before Aylan died, were their pictures less dramatic, were there no pictures of them? Is it because unlike Aylan their bodies aligned left instead of right, or because rescued from water but not found dead on the sand or because they were wearing pink instead of black? No. But Aylan's dead body gained huge public attention, why? Because it has fit to a political policy (referring to Syrian refugee politics) when it was at its peak. Other than that there is no meaning of taking photographs of dying people in earthquakes, or in wars, or in beaches. (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 27, 2016)

To sum up, it can be argued that as a professional eye Bektaş knows the demands of the disaster photography genre and contributes it with his style that forefronts human

factor. But the objects of the suffering represented differ due to demands of the political climate. He knows that his photographs uplift affective reactions from society but to him the effects of social excitement and affective mobilization are minor issues. Although he is one of the major figures in photographic production in Turkey, he understates the outcomes and effects of cultural production.

He speaks from a point of view of making visible what the professional authorities in the field would like to see. What he makes visible does not seem to transform or break with the existing visual system or pushes the limits of the visible. Therefore, it can be argued that he reproduces the proper frames within the existing hegemonic visual system. It is a matter of political appropriateness to choose which object of suffering will be visualized. He predicts and calculates what a frame would do, how it would be used in particular conjunctures, or even how an assumed audience would react to it. Plus, this calculation seems to start at the very moment of shooting an image.

In *Mythologies* Barthes (1957) discusses reception and deciphering of myths and suggests three possible readings. The first reading approaches to the myth as an empty signifier in a cynical manner. Here a simple system is imagined where concepts and forms are matched easily without demystifying or unmasking the dynamic relationship of the meaning and the form. This reading of myth is cynical where history is naturalized quickly, the complexities of concepts are not debated and myths are not distorted. Therefore the speech sounds innocent, where causalities and foundations related to the myth are naturally conjured up to the concept (pp. 127-130).

Parallel to Barthes (1957) comments, it can be argued that Bektas's attitude and reading towards the photographic production on disasters is not rationalistic, nor

critical but cynical. Not only he suggests that the effects of the photographs are very limited, but also he implies that they can be calculable and estimated. By way of confirming to be a part of this predictable and anticipated affective visual production, he rejects to see the links of these affects to the hegemonic power structures.

The conversation on gender and age dimensions on the objects he has been picturing is also quite attention grabbing. Bektas confirms, “When I picture women, they always attract more attention.” He further states, “you can call it a sexist approach, or requirements of aesthetics, or what life brings. Either way this is how it is”. He clearly confirms an economy of compassion, reliance on production of pity, formation of a male gaze as aesthetic, which are the fundamental attributes of his war and disaster footage. Furthermore, they are calculated at the very beginning of this process. Therefore, it can be argued that the commodification of Yunus’s photograph starts at the moment of shooting.

Furthermore, by underlining how he had been successful throughout his career, he also confirms the myth of this is how things should be. Feldman (2006) underlines, similar to male gaze, realist percepts are blind to themselves that establish a transparent, unchanging, ahistorical and naturalistic truth claims (pp.444-445). Not only Bektas naturalizes what he does professionally, but he also reproduces a realistic perception on how visuality production should be. He contributes to a “scopic regime” which establishes politically correct modes of seeing and reception (Feldman, 2006). And this process starts at the very moment of photographic production, namely the shooting of an image.

2.3 Discussions on reality and objectivity regarding the photographic medium

In our conversation, general concepts related to visuality and photographs such as reality, representation and objectivity have also been reviewed. In his recent book Mirzoeff (2011) asks: “How can we think with and against visuality?” He defines production of visuality as a process of making history perceptible to authority, or to the governing. Also he adds that, this process can be summarized under three headings. First is the naming, categorizing and defining of the visible, whereas the second is related to segregation of these categories. Thirdly, visual modality makes separated classification seem right and aesthetic. Referring to Ranciere, Mirzoeff adds that this aesthetics is not related to an understanding of beauty but aesthetics is at the core of politics, it is a system that determines the sense experience. Therefore for Mirzoeff visuality sutures the authority to power and renders this association natural. Mirzoeff also underlines that critical events can be a symptom of visuality crises, where the authority structures are questioned by counter-visualities. In these crises, the form of the real and realism in all senses are at stake in an aesthetic regime (Mirzoeff, 2011, pp.2-8).

In a similar vein, Sekula (1986) underlines that photography constructs an imaginary world and passes it off as reality. Sekula (1986) states;

Photographer, archivist, editor, curator can all claim, when challenged about their interpretations, to be merely passing along a neutral reflection of an already established state of affairs. Underlying this process of professional denial is commonsensical empiricism. The photograph reflects reality... thus the naturalization of the cultural, seen by Roland Barthes as an essential characteristic of photographic discourse, is repeated and reinforced at virtually every level of the cultural apparatus, unless it is interrupted by criticism. (Sekula, 1986, p.186)

As a professional photographer Bektas states that sometimes his left wing friends, or opponents of the ruling party, criticize him to take “too aestheticized” photos of high rank governing politicians. Meanwhile, he adds that sometimes his right wing friends

criticize him when he pictures police brutality on civilians. Bektas refuses to accept such criticism when he underlines that “all of them take place in this country and I picture what happens”. By claiming picturing what happens, it can be said that Bektas acknowledges and credits the mimetic qualifications (objectivity, reality, representation) of photographic medium and accordingly, taking pictures of what really happened should not be criticized. Yet he confirms that a photograph should have aesthetic components and to him those should not be criticized as well.

As the conversation on photographic reality gets further, he underscores that claiming reality equals not manipulating photographs through technological programs and devices. When asked about the representability and originality of his photographs, he defends authenticity measures by not manipulating his photographs;

Reuters has very strict rules. You cannot manipulate the photograph, we cannot use Photoshop, cannot even erase the dust on someone’s face. Other agencies are different; we always service the original photograph. We can only do cropping. (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 27, 2016)

In order to explain the concepts of objectivity and neutrality, Bektas splits the photograph from the photographer and reifies the photograph as if it is something that exists on its own sake. Through professionalism, a photograph becomes neutral.

He states as follows;

A photographer cannot be neutral; everybody has alignments to certain political sides. And I have a certain political view as well. But what I want to underline is that a photographer or journalist should not deform the final product due to her or his political views. Other than that, there is not problem of sticking to your political view. You may be loving children, may be leftist, or rightist, or radical Islamic but when you are doing your professional job; you should not let your political view to affect you. (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 27, 2016)

Consequently; a professional photograph taken by a professional photographer is neutral if it is not manipulated intentionally. He affirms the myth of objective truths reflected by the medium. Therefore, he also affirms that the gaze of the sovereign

and the hegemonic is apolitical, neutral, real, objective and true. Feldman (2006) underlines that scopic regimes do not have an original and literal eye, but has a “reified gaze” that materializes and channels violence in the sensory ecology. This hegemonic façade has a core of blindness to itself. To him gaze is a mechanics of power and the objects in this vision becomes an adjunct, an instrument and an automation of the scopic regime (p.432). Yet Bektas confirms that his photographs are apolitical, neutral, professional and successful. As a legitimate player of the professional journalism field, he speaks from the collectively orchestrated habitus of news production. He defines success as being neutral, apolitical, and non-manipulative in the professional field. As a legitimate and successful member of the field, he shapes these norms and the habits, meanwhile ignores to see his own contribution in formation of them. Therefore he legitimizes the myth of “this is how things are” and the existing structure of the news-making field.

It can be argued that claims of truth, evidence making, objectivity and representation qualifications of photographic medium are closely linked to the violence inherent to framing (Sekula, 1986; Derrida, 1987; Feldman, 2005; Butler, 2009). In *Frames of War*, Butler (2009) argues that there is no life or no death without a relation to some frame. Butler argues that to call the frame into question is “to show that the frame never quite contained the scene it was meant to limn, that something was already outside, which made the very sense of the inside possible, recognizable” (Butler, 2009, p.9). Butler (2009) also adds that the frame does not hold anything together in one place but always something gets out of hand, breaks out and break from the frame (p.10). Butler (2009) underlines that the taken for granted reality, the authority behind the frame, the affects produced by this structure

of the frame, and their relationship to practice and political should be questioned (pp.12-13).

Citing from Kracauer (1995), Feldman (2005) emphasizes that modern visual media can be imagined as a reduction and an abbreviation that “passes itself off as a whole”. He adds that this perception of wholeness inherits a visual process of displacement, and a form of material violence, which “excludes the non-depictable, non-visual terrains of memory and everyday life experience”. He adds that the aesthetics of catastrophe is a kind of filtering that acts as a historical and experiential whole (Feldman, 2005, p.221). In a way what is seen becomes what has happened. As Feldman (2006) underlines, this realist genre dominates most of our visual experience and the realist claim of photographic medium becomes a mechanism to approve the systematic violence (Feldman, 2006, p.441)¹⁷.

This brings us to the discussion on framing (inclusion) and elimination (exclusion) processes of photographs. So far I have discussed how Yunus’s photograph is produced, but I also have the urge to dig more to understand the elimination process of photographs in order to position Yunus’s photograph in this visual hierarchy. When inquired about the elimination and editing of the photographs, Bektas underlines mostly their photographs are not eliminated by a third person. He describes the workflow of their agency as follows; two photographers are assigned to an event, the one who is close to the event zone goes to the area quickly, the other photographer checks the photographs sent on computer in terms of their technical qualifications. As Bektas puts it, only the person behind the camera does the elimination and decides what to send. The colleague behind the desk only checks the technical measures. He adds that;

¹⁷ Derrida (1987) also underlines that frame is more than a division between inside and outside of it. Rather frame is a third component, a force that contains an epistemic violence (as cited in Cherry, 2003, p.54)

Sometimes I send two or three frames of the same scene, just to be sure, because I see them very small on the camera's screen, then my colleague chooses one of them and services it. That's it. They don't eliminate staff photographer's photos in our agency. We as the photographers do the elimination ourselves. We don't service every scene. For instance when Reuter's photographers service two or three frames, our competitor agency usually services twenty, twenty-five frames for the same job. (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 27, 2016)

But this might not be the case all the time. Bektaş also underlines that sometimes the agency may demand and decide on the number of photographs they service. He underlines that for "top stories" they don't limit themselves in servicing photographs. He exemplifies the situation as follows

For instance the case in Georgia was very important. The agency sent five photographers to the location and we serviced 30-40 photographs a day, making five of us, around 1000 photographs in total... In Yunus's case I had around 200 photographs in hand, but I serviced 3 or 4 of them. One wide angle, one close-up...etc, applicable to diverse page designs. (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 27, 2016)

Working on archives, Sekula discusses the imaginary economy of photographs from a materialist perspective. According to him archives "embody the power inherent to accumulation, collection and hoarding as well as the power inherent in the rules of a language", therefore archives cannot be neutral within the plenitude of possibilities. Sekula elaborates, how pictures are atomized and isolated (artistic and aesthetic qualifications) in one way and homogenized (taxonomic ordering) in another (Sekula, 1986, p.184-185). Sekula problematizes the unique perception of photography as an aesthetic form as well as showing how photograph as a material is classified, categorized or taxonomically ordered in numerical measures.

For Sekula (1986), photography establishes its truth not by logical argument, but by providing experience. They are uncritically represented as historical documents as well as aesthetic objects. He states that

The hidden imperatives of photographic culture drag us into two contradictory directions, on one hand towards science, and a myth of

objective truths, on the one hand, towards art and a cult of subjective experience. This dualism haunts photography... photography is neither art, nor science but is suspended between the both discourse of science and of art, staking its claims to cultural value on both the model of truth upheld by empirical science and the model of pleasure and expressiveness offered by romantic aesthetics. (Sekula, 1986, p.190)

In our conversation with the photojournalist we can sense this dualistic perception of photography. He sometimes perceives his photographs as artistic objects that are in and for themselves, sometimes as material objects that can be calculated, classified and objectified. Bektaş values the artistic components of his photographs when he claims that he is the one to service “the” photograph of a critical event to the world, the one who frames the visible, assured by how to shoot a successful photograph and which ones to eliminate. On the other hand, he can clearly explain the hierarchy between critical incidents by numbers, easily compare the number of photographs taken in “top incidents” with “ordinary earthquakes” or name the undervalued products in this production economy. Furthermore he is competent to categorize and classify the frames of the industry. On the one hand the automation of the production of visibility is recognized, and on the other, claims of artistic authenticity, apoliticism and professional neutrality is internalized. When needed, he aligns with the aesthetic and professional features of the medium that naturalizes power relations, truth and history making. Parallel to Sekula’s suggestions, he swings between the artistic and materialistic qualifications of photographic imagery as he wishes. Bektaş defines the professional dynamics of the economy as follows;

Whether I support or not, I believe that a president’s photograph should be proper. Of course I vote, I support some politicians, and do not support others. But take it or leave it, I give importance to a photograph’s aesthetic value. Because it is a frame and it has to be published. Because you know that at least five or six different agencies are also servicing the same event, you have to compete, you have to be professional. (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 27, 2016)

To conclude, it can be suggested that through Bektas's lens and elimination as a professional photographer the world is visualized in many critical incidents. What the photographer frames, directly goes to Reuters' subscribers. He is qualified and addressed as the person who can summarize a critical event in two photographs. He clearly contributes to the making of the visual history of critical incidents. Furthermore, he does not have to service many frames as the competitor agencies do. Later, the conversation leads to how he filters his own photographs. Then he discloses his working principles as follows; "Sometimes you know that a photograph would create problems, then you just don't service it". So he is the one to frame the visible who internalizes the correct modes of seeing and who does not prefer to *break* with it or let anything to spill out of it. As discussed earlier, he speaks from the norms of the professional field, meanwhile shaping them. He complies with the political context and the expectations of the agency. Therefore, he internalizes the habitus of cultural production in the journalism field.

Bektas embraces the mimetic properties of photographic medium. He claims objectivity and neutrality when he states he pictures what happens in this country. To him reality is only distorted through computer programs like Photoshop or can be deformed or abused by the photographer's political alignments. To him a photograph or a frame is not political by itself. So he internalizes and contributes to a visual modality, which renders itself both true and aesthetic. His professional tone of voice confirms the realist understanding of photographs with claims of transparency and truth making. Furthermore, he identifies with a realist gaze, which is blind to see its own look.

2.4 Conclusion

In this section, I discuss and situate Yunus's photograph in the visual production economy of news-making by relying on the comments of the photographer who produced the image. In the first part, the discussion on how Yunus's photograph was taken and serviced can be found. It is seen that Yunus's being a 13-year-old earthquake victim urged the photographer to spend his night around him. It is implied that, what made him stop there and wait for hours to shoot the right moment is a very professional decision attached to the model's being a child, who is carrying a dead person's hand on his shoulder. In this encounter it can be argued that, with the help of professional codes, his personal involvement and emotions diminish, while Yunus is defined as an object of photography. Later the photographer demonstrated how he values dramatic components and human factor in disaster photography genre. It can be claimed that the objectification and commodification process of the photograph started at the moment of shooting and it is calculated at every level of the process.

Later the photographer claims the predictability of affects produced when the picture meets its audience. Working in warzone and disasters, Bektas assumes an audience that will be moved by the dramatic components of his frames. Yet he deduces and calculates their reaction to a limited and passive version of compassion. Üstündağ, defines pornography as the actions that aim to create immediate affective and physical reactions by objectifying what it displays¹⁸. Here it can be noticed that the immediate planning of moving the audience and prediction of the affects to be produced in a very initial stage of the process.

¹⁸ Retrieved January 2014, from https://www.academia.edu/4765769/Pornografik_Devlet-Erotik_Direnif_Kürt_Erkek_Bedenlerinin_Genel_Ekonomisi_1

We can clearly see that Yunus's picture is an object of pain and that it is used as a material in politics of pity, but in a particular way it complies with the expectations of professional journalism field. Bektas underlines that Yunus's picture can only move its assumed audience in a particular way, inviting to clearing conscience by actions of charity. This discourse fixes the encounter of the subject and the object of pain in a particular and delimited way.

Furthermore, I discovered that news and photographs of disastrous events have hierarchy between them and this hierarchy can be expressed and diagnosed numerically. I figured that neither Yunus's picture nor the earthquake is labeled as "top story" and two or three frames of him for different page designs are enough for this news economy. Sekula approaches a photograph as a material that can be classified, categorized and homogenized in the archives, here Bektas shows that in this visual production economy, visual materials have hierarchy between them, which can be homogenized, categorized and taxonomized as well.

Finally, it is seen that the photographer relies on the artistic components of the medium when naturalization and normalization needed. He internalizes a definition of success and requirements of the journalism field with the help of artistic components of the medium. On the other hand, he might switch to a cynical discourse quickly that reproduces the myth of "this is how things should be", which de-historicizes, naturalizes and simplifies complex power relationships and obscures the histories attached to them.

CHAPTER 3
THE PERFORMANCE OF YUNUS'S PHOTOGRAPH
IN THE MAINSTREAM PRINT MEDIA

In the previous chapter, I have detailed the production process of a single photograph. Here my aim is to analyze further and position the photograph as a visual material in the news circulation and problematize the mainstream disaster news discourse it is embedded in the cultural production process.

In very broad terms, my approach of discourse and visual analysis is to focus on the organization of the disaster news discourse, the visual and the textual material by which it is constructed. Gillian Rose (2001) proposes that the focus of discourse analysis may be on the organization of the discourse itself, how the discourse describes things, how it distributes blame and responsibility, or how it particularizes or categorizes. She suggests that these questions lead to a revelation of the power relations that constitute social differences (Rose, 2001, p.150). Following her lead, this section aims at analyzing selected mainstream newspapers for one week period after the Van Earthquake 2011, in order to discuss the key themes, key words, recurring images, clusters, as well as to examine the hints for the “absent presents”, gaps, silences, contradictions and the assumed audience of disaster news.

Keeping in mind this set of research aims, eight newspapers are scanned and examined for one-week period (24-31 October 2011) following the earthquake. The newspapers selected are *Akit*, *Birgün*, *Habertürk*, *Radikal*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah*, *Star*, and *Yeni Şafak*. All of the newspapers selected are mainstream and nationally distributed newspapers. Through an archival research in library, every news on the incident in

these selected newspapers are included in the analysis and over 400 hundred news regarding the earthquake are examined. These news vary from articles of opinion leaders to minor follow-up stories and from front page headlines to news in economy, magazine or sports sections. This sample of newspapers is selected firstly with concerns on availability in archives. Some newspapers had to be automatically eliminated (like *Sözcü*, *Evrensel*, or *Gündem* newspapers). Among the available ones, these eight particular samples are selected based on the assumption to cover diversified newspapers from the right-wing, left-wing, pro-government, oppositional, religious/conservative as well as more secular newspapers. But before a detailed focus on aftermath news of the earthquake, a theoretical overview on discourse analysis literature will be briefly examined in the following section. My method is similar to what Hutchison (2014) proposes “an interpretive method loosely derived from a combination of both semiotics and discourse analysis” (Hutchison, 2014, p.7). Basically I rely on discussions held by Rose (2001) in *Visual Methodologies* and tools of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse analysis, which are occasionally supplemented by semiology to discuss cultural significances.

3.1 Approaches to discourse analysis

It will sound like stating the obvious, but only particular events become news and in only a particular ways. Machin (2008) reminds us the fact that news should not be seen as simple window of the world but as products of institutions (Machin, 2008 p.63). Sarah Niblock (2005) stresses that the concept of news value, or news selection criteria, is less to do with the instincts of the newsmakers, or having “a nose for” the news, but are related to internalizing a set of arbitrary values that have been established through institutional practices. She adds that journalists are storytellers,

who transform particular events to particular news stories. The writer summarizes that the basic newsworthiness criteria are; closure, frequency, unambiguity, meaningfulness, unexpectedness, continuity, reference to elite nations or elite people, reference to human factors, and reference to something negative (Niblock, 2005, pp.74-76). Niblock states that newsmakers do not work with any checklists of newsworthiness criteria, but when news texts themselves as are closely examined, these subgroupings are clearly recognized.

Summarizing from Bennett (2005), Machin (2008) also stresses that personalization, dramatization, fragmentation and authority-disorder bias are the basic “qualities that events must possess” in order to be perceived as having news potential. In personalization; complex issues are deduced to personal mistakes, individual faults or personal gains or losses. Whereas in dramatization; characters are put in center with drama, crises and resolution. In fragmentation, similar to dramatization and personalization, the events are isolated from their socio-political context so that they are easily captured. And lastly, the authority-disorder quality is related with general threats to general order, to concepts such as general health, democracy, population or children (Machin, 2008, pp.75-76).

Keeping in mind both Bennett and Niblock’s suggestions, I decided to check the front pages national newspaper for one day to see how these newsworthiness and news potential criteria are at work. On 25 October 2011, two days after the earthquake when all national newspapers had enough time and material to prepare earthquake news, I examined all national newspapers’ front pages. Among a total of 35 daily national newspapers, 33 of them made the earthquake front-page news with

photographs and most of them spared the headline section to the earthquake.¹⁹ So the earthquake gained huge attention of national mainstream news media in Turkey. The Unexpectedness and focusing on human factor match with the Niblock's newsworthiness criteria mentioned above. Furthermore, personalization and dramatization are the dominant means of storytelling in the front-page news. Dramatization tool can be explicitly seen in news such as; "Waited for the life with the death's hand on his shoulder" (*Akşam*, p.1); "Every debris is a distinct tragedy" (*Vatan*, p.1); "Death" (*Takvim*, p.1) whereas personalization and fragmentation techniques are plainly seen in news such as, "Not earthquake but state demolished" (*Evrensel*, p.1), "Thief killed again", (*Milliyet*, p.1); "Killer is the same", (*Güneş*, p.1) etc. Serviced with such news in front pages, we mostly see photographs of victims in a context of debris, especially in relation to demolished buildings. Interestingly these key visuals of the front-page news are dominantly articulated through the concepts of unity, brotherhood and help, which will be discussed in detail in the upcoming section.

In her well-known book, *Visual Methodologies*, Gillian Rose (2001) reviews Foucault's approach to discourse theory. Discourse refers to "a group of statements which structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking", so discourse is the particular knowledge that shapes how the world is understood, and how things are done in it (Rose, 2001, p. 136). The most powerful discourses, whose effects are most productive in the social realm, are assumed to be the true knowledge. Consequently, the basis on which truth is fabricated constitutes particular regimes of truth. Discursive formations are examined in order to see how relations between parts of a discourse are interconnected, formed and function. Rose

¹⁹ The two newspapers did not make news of the Van earthquake in their front page are sport newspapers. Retrieved from <http://www.gazetearsivi.info/2011/10/25102011-tarihli-gazete-mansetleri.html>

suggests that the field of visibility can be seen as a sort of discourse as well. She suggests that particular things are visible in particular ways whereas some things are invisible in the field of vision (Rose, 2001, pp.137-138). She adds that in visual representations identifying key elements, paying attention to the complexities and to the contradictions or looking to the invisible as well as visible are helpful in critically examining the effects of truth in the field of visibility (p. 158).

Rose (2001) divides Foucault's approach to discourse to two major fields with distinct methodologies. First approach mainly focuses on discursive formations and their productivity in terms of their effects, whereas the second one's locus is on the institutions and technologies concerned with the issues of power and regimes of truth produced along (p.140). Hereby, I do not apply institutional analysis. She summarizes that the first approach focuses on rhetorical organization, social production of materials, the production and effects of social difference through discursive regimes of truth (Rose, 2001, p.163). My intention of discourse analysis in the following section is in line with the understanding that prioritizes discursive formations and rhetorical organizations, in order to see the formations around Yunus's image and examine its productivity of effects in return.

In their book *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (2002) Jorgensen and Philips give the preliminary definition of discourse as the "particular way of talking about and understanding the world, or an aspect of the world" (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p.1). They elaborate three social constructionist approaches, which are Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, Critical Discourse Analysis and discursive psychology. Accordingly, the writers comment that the common premises of these social constructionists approaches are, being critical towards taken-for-granted knowledges, their emphasis on cultural and historical specificity and linking

knowledges to social processes and social action (pp.5-6). Jorgensen and Philips (2002) also suggest that these three approaches reject the understanding of the social as governed by one totalizing ideology whereas accept pluralistic existence of knowledge regimes in which many discourses compete (pp.16-17). In my analysis I will provide how clashes of discourses are invited to consensus after the Van Earthquake as a critical event.

Laclau and Mouffe's approach to discourse analysis suggests that discourse is a temporary closure that fixes the meaning in a particular way, and in a particular context. Accordingly, Laclau and Mouffe accept the structural totality of signs whereas they reject the fixation of this structure. Their major question is to tackle the production processes of discourses so as to see how they manage to create a reality that appears objective and natural (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, pp. 29-33). They center their analysis on the myths that appear "objectively true" while others seem as impossible to be true (p.40). As Jorgensen and Philips (2002) summarize; Laclau and Mouffe's method empirically analyzes the nodal points, master signifiers, myths, articulations, closures, exclusions, concepts concerning identity and representation and concepts in which floating signifiers are in antagonism in discourses (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, pp. 26-28, pp.50-51). Now I will elaborate briefly what these concepts stand for.

Laclau and Mouffe use a special terminology in their discourse analysis method. A discourse is formed by the partial fixation of meaning around certain "nodal points". Nodal points are the privileged signs where other signs get together and acquire meaning. Words like "democracy" in politics, or "people" in national discourses are examples to nodal points. The structured totality of "articulatory" practice is called the discourse. "Moments" are the positions articulated within a

discourse, whereas “elements” are not discursively articulated, elements are the signs with polysemy and discourse attempts to transform these elements to moments. Further, the temporary freezes in meaning are called “closure” and discourse is a temporary closure where meaning is fixed in a particular way. According to Laclau and Mouffe, the exclusions, the non-articulated possibilities are also the part of discourse practice. All possibilities excluded from the discourse are called the “field of discursivity”. This field is not only the reservoir of new articulations, but also helps to form the fixation of meanings in the discourse. The central theme, “articulation”, is the very practice of selection and exclusion, through which discourses are reproduced, challenged or transformed (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, pp.26-29).

Laclau and Mouffe propose that all social phenomena and objects obtain their meanings through discourse, which is “a structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed” (Laclau 1988, as cited in Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, p. 267). In Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, the full saturation of meaning and impossibility of reaching a final closure is emphasized (p.268). Furthermore, Carpentier and De Cleen (2007) highlight the primacy of the political over the social in Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory. He states that the text and the context are analyzed at their macro level. Accordingly, the method becomes valuable especially, for analyses of “deconstructing the complex relationships between representation, practices and identities, and the way they contribute to the generation of meanings” (Carpentier & De Cleen 2007, pp. 277-278).

In a similar vein, Torfing (2005) summarizes the discourse analysis literature while concentrating on post-structuralist discourse theory. According to his summary, five distinct features of Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of discourse are: first

the argument that all social practice take place against a background of historically specific discourses and within the discourse meaning is constructed either in terms of difference or equivalence. Here the empty signifiers serve as nodal points for partial fixation of meaning. Second, discourse is constructed in and through hegemonic struggles, shaped by means of articulation wherein naturalizing and universalizing myths are central. Third, social antagonisms and the threatening otherness are tools to set the limits and closure of discourse, so what and who are included and excluded are central part of discursive politics. Fourth, hegemonic discourse may be dislocated when it is confronted by the events that it cannot locate, represent or explain. This may result in disruption or proliferation of floating signifiers. And finally, the subject of the discursive structure is always split, it is not an ahistorical subjectivity outside the structure but it is internal to the structure, which is never complete and might identify with various identities and discourses at the same time (Torfing, 2005, pp: 14-17).

In line with the purpose of this thesis, I combine Rose's categories on visual analysis with Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis tools in order to analyze the contradictions and ambivalences in discursive formations after the Van Earthquake. My aim will be to concentrate on the discursive formations, articulations and nodal points in the disaster news discourse, to find out the closures, moments and floating signifiers, which will later be connected to the hegemonic discourses of humanitarianism at one hand and to the Peace Process at the other. As my sample of analysis consists of earthquake news in a determined time interval and in only national mainstream newspapers, this analysis will reflect the internal dynamics of dominant media imagery circulation, performance of an image in news media and discursive articulations in the journalism field after a critical event.

3.2 Key themes, key words, and recurring images

When we focus on the news released in the selected sample of newspapers, very briefly, the reoccurring keywords of aftermath news of the earthquake are “brotherhood, mobilization, help, miracle, unity, friendship and pain”²⁰. However, the recurring visual materials of the earthquake are debris/damage, suffering/crying human portraits, aerial shots of damage, rescue teams on duty, lines/crowds/looting/chaos, life in tents and seldom visiting authorities. These themes and visuals can be thought as the key elements and moments in the discursive articulation of the Van earthquake news. Furthermore, some of the newspapers arranged specific sequential sections that lasted several days servicing only earthquake news, with specific visual materials other than photographs; such as the “Yine Yıkıldık (Ruined Again)”²¹ special section of *Milliyet Newspaper*, the “Deprem 7.2 (Earthquake 7.2)” of *Sabah Newspaper* and the “Acı Vatan 7.2 (Bitter Land 72.)” of *Radikal Newspaper*. I will discuss how these special sections tackle only certain issues. But first, I will try to engage with how the dominant keywords and key visuals are connected in the specific discourse of disaster.

3.2.1 Unity, brotherhood and pain discourse

Without exceptions, all of the scanned newspapers use the language of unity and brotherhood, while most of them personify Turkey as a mobilized homogeneous entity in action or with emotions. Expressions such as “Van demolished, Turkey cried” (*Star*, 24 Oct. 2011, pp.14-15); “Turkey’s heart beat for Van” (*Star*, 25 Oct. 2011, p.1); “Turkey is mobilized for help”, “people’s eyes are full of tears again” (*Akit*, 24 Oct. 2011, p.1&11); “The earthquake in Van, shake Turkey with pain

²⁰ Kardeşlik, seferberlik, yardım, mucize, birlik/ bir olma, dostluk ve acı

²¹ “yıkıldık” denotes two meanings; we as people fall apart and collapse of buildings

again,²²” (*Habertürk*, 24 Oct. 2011, p.1); “Turkey should set aside its pride and accept helps” (*Milliyet*, 26 Oct. 2011, p. 22); “Turkey intervened the earthquake immediately” (*Star*, 25 Oct. 2011, p.11); “Turkey is mobilized from 7 to 70²³ in order to heal the wounds of Van” (*Milliyet*, Oct 2011); “From workers to employers, tradesman to housewives Turkey is united as one heart” (*HaberTürk*, Oct 2011) and so on..

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Ahmed (2014) proposes that *contact zones* of emotions and affect involve subjects, histories and objects at the same time, and subjects do not come before the histories embedded to those emotions. She underlines that emotions are aroused by contact with objects, rather than *caused* by them (Ahmed, 2014 p. 6) and both the subject and the object of emotions are constructed in the encounter. Emotions are neither simply in the subject or the object but in the very contact zone. Therefore, Ahmed (2014) offers that the very surfaces and boundaries that become “sticky” or “saturated” with affect are the sites of personal and social tension. Moreover feelings become “fetishes”; qualities seem to reside in objects, or subjects, which is the “erasure of the specific history of production and circulation” of those specific feelings (p.11).

She works on the traces and surfaces to see how longer histories of articulation are changing, meanwhile focuses on the expressions, which are saturated with feelings. To her, naming emotions creates a reality effect, and the effect of naming of emotions often works through attributions of causality. Furthermore, metonymy and metaphors are crucial to examining the emotionality of texts (pp.12-13).

²² The emphasis on *again* is sometimes associated with the martyrs lost few days ago, and sometimes with the losses in previous earthquakes or disasters.

²³ “from 7 to 70” is a popular expression in Turkish that denotes to cover all age groups

Concomitantly, Sara Ahmed (2014) works on the production of the subject, the affect and the object of that feeling. She clarifies her discussion with a text that claims the “nation mourns”. She states:

...What does it do to say the ‘nation mourns’? This is a claim that both that nation has a feeling (the nation is the subject of the feeling), but also that generates the nation as the object of our feeling (we might mourn on behalf of the nation). The feeling does simply exist before the utterance, but becomes ‘real’ as an effect shaping different kinds of actions and orientations. To say, ‘the nation mourns’ is to generate the nation as if it were a mourning subject. The nation becomes a shared ‘object’ of feeling through the orientation that is taken towards it. As such, emotions are performative and they involve speech acts. (Ahmed, 2014, p.13)

What we have here in the Van Earthquake news discourse is that Turkey is constructed as an emotional subject that cries, shakes with pain, whose eyes are full of tears, and heart beat for one single cause. Furthermore in the expressions it is also seen that “Van” is formed as a single entity, the object that causes these emotions. Actions and emotions are oriented towards it. Turkey is related and connected to Van through pain and the suffering of earthquake victims is the cause of Turkey’s pain. Turkey is feeling the pain because one of its parts is facing an unexpected and unfortunate event, and it effects the whole, therefore it is crying as a united whole. So, in the nodal point of “Turkey”, the object and subject of the discourse are constructed via the affective power of pain. In sum, Turkey is the subject of the feeling of pain, who is crying, shaking, or setting aside its pride, therefore compromising and as a totalized entity it is mobilized and oriented towards overcoming its pain with specific actions, such as healing wounds, intervening, uniting as one heart. Hence, it is also the shared object of feeling that invites its citizens to cry together, to mourn, to unite and to form a whole.

Berlant (2000) underlines that self-evidence and objectivity of painful feeling and the nation's duty to eradicate it is a popular rhetoric by which pain is advanced.

She states;

National sentimentality operates when relatively privileged citizens are exposed to the suffering of their intimate others, so that to be virtuous requires feeling the pain of flawed or denied citizenship as their own pain. (Berlant, 2000, p.35)

Turkey's being in pain as a whole creates a reality effect as if the whole nation is mourning on the incident without exceptions. A discourse constructed on pain and naming the emotion in advance sounds valid, self-evident and true, as well as it totalizes and erases histories of conflict. But it is very well-known that a discourse of hatred was prevalent right after the earthquake both in mainstream and social media. In social media the circulated discourse of hatred was implying a kind of relief because the earthquake happened in a geography whose citizens are mostly Kurdish. So parallel to Berlant's suggestion, the pain and suffering of the flawed/denied citizens of Turkish republic, namely the Kurds, make relatively advantaged citizens, namely the Turks, virtuous through pain sharing, where the hate discourse is attempted to be erased as if there is no such thing. There had been a closure of discourse and a multicultural imaginary of unconditional unity is supposedly formed via validness and self-evidence of pain sharing. In line with Ahmed's suggestion, the separation of object and subject is critical, since the claim of feeling someone else's particular pain exactly is actually impossible, because one can only experience his/her particular feeling during the encounter with someone else's particular pain. The formation of the language of "unity" and "brotherhood" contains ambivalences. The *Haberturk* newspaper quotes a politician's statement, which orders the citizens of Turkey to collaborate, while emphasizing that no one will be excluded from the help aids and emergency services provided. The news states that "no one will be

discriminated, and everyone will collaborate on duty”²⁴ (*HaberTürk* 28 October 2011, p.20). This sentence addresses to a self-evident expectation on discrimination in advance and imposes an order and imperative to collaborate as a nation, but also is a sort of response to the doubts set on certain discriminative actions taken in the disaster management process and allocation of humanitarian aids²⁵. The discourse of news closes in itself under the keyword of unity as if there are no deficiencies in the aftermath disaster management.

“One wrist, one heart, *tek bilek tek yürek*” (Sabah 25 Oct 2011); is serviced as the headline with a half page photograph of Yunus Geray (see Fig.1). So the one wrist, one heart and the wholeness of the population are mobilized to save a boy under the rubble, and citizens are invited to identify with the unity discourse of nation on this duty, with both their hearts and physical labor. It is further stated, “Van earthquake triggered our feelings of solidarity and brotherhood. Help aids are *raining* to Van from Edirne to Kars, Istanbul to Cyprus, from the whole nation²⁶” (*Sabah*, 25 Oct 2011, p.1). Collaboration is constructed as to cover the whole geography.

²⁴ “kimse dışlanmadan herkes elele vererek birlikte çalışacak”, President A. Gül, *HaberTürk*, 28 October, 2011

²⁵ There were rumors on unjust distribution of help aids between AKP and BDP municipalities, as if the government was giving privilege to the victims ruled by pro-government municipalities and discriminating the victims who reside in towns ruled by the oppositional party. (For details see S.Aydın’s unpublished MA thesis, *The Regeneration of Poverty and Exclusion after the Van Earthquake*, Bogazici Uni, 2016, pp.51-57)

²⁶ These mentioned geographical places represent the east, west, south, and north in the map of Turkey.



Figure 1 Yunus in headlines
Sabah, 25 October 2011, p.1

Heart metaphor unites the nation. This metaphor is used to express that each and every citizen shares a common feeling. Further, Turkey is imagined as a body with one united heart whose wrist is at service, an active agent, helping or rescuing its brother under the ruins. Metaphors on body parts such as heart and wrist help to construct and imagine the nation as a united entity with a particular feeling, who is acting only in a particular way. Therefore, meaning is fixed in a particular way.

A similar emphasis with a different visual material took place in *Akit* newspaper. “74 million clinched” (*74 milyon kenetlendik*, *Akit* 25 October 2011, p.1) headline continued as; Turkey is in a state of exception in terms of mobilizing itself as a whole, in which 74 million people stick together. Furthermore, the news finishes by stating “this is brotherhood” statement with the emphasis on the hard work of rescue teams. Like most newspapers did, this news is serviced with Yunus’s photograph, yet interestingly, not the most popular close up photo of Yunus, but the context of the debris and team effort are emphasized in the collage visual material (see Fig.2). In this visual vulnerability of human body is emphasized and the context becomes the main focus. This vulnerability of the human body signifies deadliness of human body, at the same time it produces sentiments of compassion to save a passive, fragile victim who is portrayed in need in his/her very personal and fragile moment of facing death.



Figure 2 Yunus in the context of debris
Akit, 25 October 2011, p.1

As discussed, a discourse on unity of nation is widespread in Van earthquake news. The compassionate subject is constructed as the nation, Turkey as a whole, which is mobilized no matter what, towards the painful suffering object, Van, in the dominant news discourse. Yet this relationship itself is political, because of the difference and hierarchy between the two parties. The subject is active and content, whereas the object is helpless and stuck under the rubble. Furthermore, this “no matter what” becomes problematic because of its overemphasis as if to cover up something threatening this unity. It can be argued that an expectation of discrimination is absently present in the discourse. News clustered around the brotherhood discourse reveals the ambivalence and hierarchy more visible from a critical perspective to see the formation of self-evident myths.

The glimpse of implying difference within the hegemonic unity discourse becomes more noticeable in brotherhood news such as; “Brotherhood, in spite of, *inadına kardeşlik*” (*Akit* 28 October 2011, p.1), “This is brotherhood” (*Yeni Şafak* 25 October 2011, p.1), “We felt the brotherhood” (*Kardeşliği hissettik*, *Yeni Şafak*, 30 October 2011, p.14), “The fault line of brotherhood is not broken”, (*kardeşlik fayı kırılmadı*, *Star*, 25 October 2011, p.1, see Fig 3). ‘In spite of what or who?’ is the first question comes to minds. Here, there exists a gap that is sensed, yet not explicitly

stated. Why is specifically a discourse of brotherhood is preferred in an aftermath disaster news discourse? As it can be seen; brotherhood is expressed as something to be felt, out there, clearly noticed and undamaged in spite of something not expressed with words. It can be argued that such news imply that the brotherhood is secured in spite of the ethnic difference of the citizens, or the hate discourse became visible in social media, or the shared history of conflict. It is implied that at the end of the day, we are brothers on good days and bad ones.



Figure 3 Yunus in headlines, brotherhood emphasis
Star, 25 October 2011, p.1

It is also noticed that, brotherhood is articulated as similar to a feeling, which is felt by everyone, as a claim that is already there and not broken in spite of the differences and history of the two ethnic groups. Furthermore, Turkey as a whole did not turn their back to their brothers on this unfortunate day, although there had been much between them. It unites the nation, as if they are family members, and gives the nation an opportunity to identify with virtuous feeling of doing the right thing on this unfortunate day in spite of the mistakes the other party done in the past. It invites to an affect economy of being proud of doing the right thing and the nation becomes the shared object of feeling. But it also implies a difference, a hierarchy between the nations because the condition of this brotherhood bond is dependent on an imaginary of “we” united similar to me. Not the politically active earthquake victims, or threatening others but the ordinary suffering citizens who are less political or

“innocent” deserve to be called as the acceptable brother. Yunus figure seems to perfectly fit into this discourse.

As Ahmed (2014) suggests; multicultural love involves assimilating others into itself, to make itself ‘like itself’ (Ahmed, 2014, p.137). The brotherhood discourse contains feelings of compassion and love in a similar way. Moreover, it idealizes the relationship between the two ethnic groups. Ahmed (2014) states that love produces the collective as ideal and how acting in the name of love can work to enforce a particular ideal onto others to enter the community. Therefore, the multicultural fantasy works as a form of conditional love (p.129).

A conservative newspaper claims (*Akit*) that the brotherhood bond rests on Muslim identity of both parties. Accordingly, “solidarity relies on Muslim brotherhood”²⁷ says the news (*Akit*, 26 Oct. 2011). In a way, in spite of the ethnic difference, which is sensed as “absently present” in brotherhood discourse, brotherhood is solidified by means of religion. So the religious bond should be remembered on this unfortunate day. The news adds that; because of the terrorist attacks in the past few weeks, “a seed of separation was drilled”, but after the Van earthquake “Turkey act with moral solidarity”²⁸. Meanwhile some pages later, the same newspaper asks the question “where are the looted tents going?”. The news casts doubts on tent allocation and claim that some “looters” send the benefice of victims to terrorist organizations. Here definition of the non-brother becomes clear meanwhile accusing the non-brother victim blurs the deficiencies in resource allocation.

The definition of the “non-brother” becomes explicit when the Prime Minister himself in a way confesses the unequal distribution of the emergency aids.

²⁷ “dayanışmanın ardında İslam kardeşliği var”, *Akit*, 26 Oct.2011

²⁸ “terör saldırılarıyla ayrılık tohumları ekilmek istenen Türkiye, Van’daki deprem felaketinin ardından manevi bir dayanışma içerisine girdi”, *Akit*, 26 Oct 2011

In his statement, he differentiates between the municipalities whose help aids reached smoothly to the area, while implying that some municipalities remain silent for collaboration. He underlines that the aids from İstanbul, Konya, Kayseri or Ankara municipalities (which are governed by ruling political party) reach to geography effortlessly, meanwhile even geographically closer, the Kurdish municipalities (ruled by BDP) are incapable of reaching their very close by²⁹. In a way he implies that the state's means prioritize the municipalities who have supported their political party and they are privileged in emergency distribution, and it is expected from the oppositional party to take care of their own municipalities. Since it is the government, which organizes the delivery of raining (flooding) emergency aids and money, it can be assumed that some municipalities are left aside in this organization. He continues, "in the moment of disaster you cannot find any of *these* people, but when it comes to throwing stones or Molotov bombs to police and military or burn out streets, they get organized immediately" (*Yeni Şafak*, 27 Oct. p.12)

To sum up, it can be argued that the nodal points of unity and brotherhood are articulated through feelings of shared pain and compassion. Commitment to nation and being a part of this unity is constructed upon a shared affective economy. Therefore earthquake as a natural disaster is constructed as a unifying crisis that ties people no matter what. But this language reproduces and secures the hierarchical privilege of Turks over the Kurds, or the distant citizens over the suffering victims. The mentioned concepts become intense; and are overused to cover up the Kurdish and Turkish conflict. But the divide, difference and hierarchy between the parties are present in the discourse. With unity, Turkey is constructed as the subject, while with

²⁹ "o bölgedeki malum belediyeler hemen yanı başlarına ulaşmaktan aciz", "polis taşlamak, asker taşlamak, Molotof atmak, sağı solu yakıp yıkmak için anında organize olanlar, bir bakıyorsunuz afet anında ortada yoklar" *Yeni Şafak*, 27 Oct. 2011, p.12

brotherhood Van is positioned as the little brother who is different, problematic yet similar (like they share the same religion). The ideal brotherhood bond is explicitly defined with its limits, where we can see it is not actually a “no matter what” type of bond, but a conditional one.

Besides Yunus’s photograph, brotherhood and unity discourse are also served with photographs such as a coffin carried by police and citizens with their sad expressions; military efforts or rescue team efforts on debris; women holding each other and crying, etc. But the most dominant visual material of unity and brotherhood discourse was Yunus’s photograph. Yunus was looking at our face, the black haired black-eyed 13-year-old Kurdish earthquake victim, as if he was symbolizing the little brother to be saved under the rubble. He was the “ideal victim” to be saved. In the next section the construction of victimhood is elaborated.

3.2.2 Victimhood and mobilization/help discourse

I suggest that, similar to general tendency in disaster news, in Van Earthquake victimhood is constructed upon creating ideal victims. In her article on discourse of global compassion, Höijer (2004) claims that compassion is dependent on seeing the images of “ideal victims” where ideal and less ideal are culturally constructed. Accordingly, children, women and elderly people are often seen helpless in violent situations, where mothers with children are the most preferable displays of ideal victimhood (Höijer 2004, p.517). She recognizes that when the victim of distant suffering is “helpless and innocent”, the audience is moved (p.521).

In Van earthquake news, a special emphasis on children or women photographs can be quickly recognized. Furthermore, the main characters of individual dramatic stories of suffering are mostly family members and the loss is

always constructed upon family identities. So, relying on the universal assumption on strong family ties and love shared within a family, dramatization effects are enhanced. Fathers looking for their sons, a mother feeding her baby by risking her own life, a child missing the smell of his mother are some examples of the dramatic storylines in aftermath disaster news. It can be argued that individual stories based on shared universal identities help to increase empathy and identification with victims. Furthermore, it is noticed at first sight that ages of earthquake victims are always mentioned, especially for children or babies. Expressions such as “s/he was only five years old” are a popular way of describing victims.

What makes some victims ideal whereas some less ideal in suffering representations? At first glance, age, gender (female emphasis) and being a family member seem to form the individualized victim stories ideal to identify with, since they are constructed on universal concepts. Especially children are associated with innocence and the creation of innocent victims has a “depoliticizing” effect. In the following photographs (see Fig. 4 and Fig. 5), the setting is composed of demolished houses, the children are extremely vulnerable and weak in this context, look back to us and invite to a relationship, like Yunus did in his popular iconic picture. Yunus’s photograph can be considered in this cluster of children photographs.



Figure 4 Victim children depicted
Sabah Cumartesi, 29 October 2011, Van Depremi Special Section, p.20



Figure 5 Victim children depicted
Habertürk, 25 October 2011, Van'da Deprem Acısı Special Section, p.20

It is noticed that special earthquake sections (Fig.4 and Fig.5 are examples) principally rely on dramatic misery stories. These news sections use distinct visual effects or logos where detailed personal stories of the victims are narrated with specific literary preferences; such as usage of past tense, inverted sentence structures, story lines of rise and fall of the characters.³⁰ These stories are combined with children photographs and mostly the gazes of children are addressed towards the audience. Similar to Yunus's picture, the victims are aware that their photographs are taken and invite the audience to a civil contract (Azoulay, 2008), a public sphere of being seen. In some of the visuals as a technical preference, context or background is blurred, shallow focus is used, and focus is set on the character to highlight the feelings of the people photographed (see figure 5) that summons the audience to identify with the suffering and mourning experience of the victims. It is also nourished by a popular photographic genre similar to *National Geographic* magazine (Lutz & Collins, 1993) that depicts poverty and hunger or that portrays the children of the underdeveloped world in need. Yunus's photograph also fits into this cluster.

Besides children, in visual representations we mostly see someone mourning for a lost one. These victimhood photographs represent the helplessness and pain of the victims contrasted with the huge damage caused by the nature (or actually what is

³⁰ Such as; "Hayat akıp gidiyordu çamurda"; *Milliyet*, 29 Oct. 2011.

seen is the demolished buildings or rubbles). The victims crying nearby the rubbles, closing their faces with their hands, or reflecting in sorrow are the typical visual theme overly used (see Fig. 6). Such photographs are serviced in the first days of disaster news representation circle. Mostly men are portrayed on duty and women as crying or mourning. In a way, mourning is feminized and associated with women.

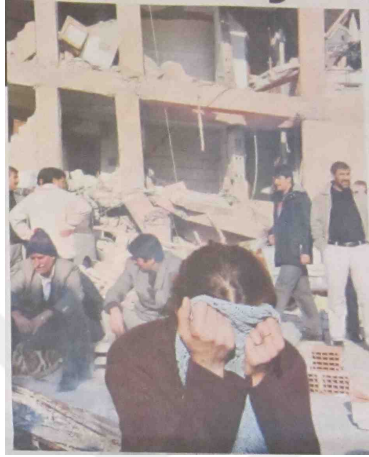


Figure 6 Victims in pain
Habertürk, 25 October 2011, Van’da Deprem Acısı Special Section p.19

Later days, another cluster of photographs emerge, which represent earthquake victims in groups and in need. Hannah Arendt (1963) informs us that in the concept of “politics of pity” a clear distinction between the sufferer and who does not suffer is generated. Furthermore, to her, suffering must be perceived as a kind of spectacle that happened to some unfortunate (Boltanski, 1999 p.3). In politics of pity, a distance between the sufferer and observed is protected. Therefore pity involves an actor (viewer) and an acted upon (sufferer) between whom a hierarchical relationship is constituted. Pity is thought to be influential to mobilize action, mostly charity (Hutchison, 2014 p.8).

Boltanski (1999) underlines that pity generalizes and involves a distance, and this generalization itself becomes “eloquent” (p.6). Compared to compassion, which is content with a curious muteness and presence, politics of pity generalize and regard the unfortunate “en masse”. This massified collection of unfortunate are

observed by those who do not experience the suffering directly. Therefore politics of pity also relies on the categorization and distinction of the unfortunate and the lucky.

He states;

The development of politics of pity thus assumes two classes, which are not unequal by reference to merit, as in the problematic of justice, but solely by reference to luck. However, there must be sufficient contact between these two classes for those who are fortunate to be able to observe, either directly or indirectly, the misery of the unfortunate, while at the same time the classes must be sufficiently distant or separate for their experiences and actions to remain clearly distinct. (Boltanski, 1999, p.5)

In contrast with the personified, dramatized single stories whose characters are mostly family members and children, the group depictions of earthquake victims we see anonymous victims who are in action of solving their problems on fundamental needs. In that cluster of visual representation, victims become anonymous and de-personified, and victims' relationships to the objects in the context become the point of emphasis. Here we see, queues or crowds in relation to distribution of help aids, who are trying to catch a package, food or tent. Unlike the personified stories that produce identification and compassion, these generalized, massified group representations of victims construct pity. Earthquake victims *en masse* are sometimes associated with pure helplessness whose lives turned upside down overnight to a tragedy, whereas in some news they are associated with looting or queue fights that ended up with gunshots (see Fig.7 and Fig.8). For instance, "Trucks emptied in five minutes" news continues (*Habertürk*, 29 Oct. p.1, p.22) that people threatened each other with knives during the distribution of emergency aids, some people had to sit on the aid boxes in order to keep them for themselves, and threatened by some group of youngsters who were most probably not from Van. I suggest that this cluster of news leaves the readers in ambivalence. On the one hand, it confirms that help aids are arriving to Van, and more aid is needed. On the other, it stresses that the

geography is an unsafe place and the aids may be going to wrong hands. It also constructs a victimhood that is unfortunate yet under-civilized in manners (see Fig.7 and 8). In a way the victims are portrayed as savages, who behave in a Hobbesian state of nature, which later legitimizes the state of emergency and military actions in the disaster area.



Figure 7 Anonymous victims receiving aids
Habertürk, 28 Oct 2011, Front page



Figure 8 Anonymous victims looting
Habertürk, 29 Oct 2011, front page

Distance is set and solidified with the news on teachers. Every newspaper made special news on teacher stories. Teachers are constructed as ideal victims who sacrifice their lives for the virtuous purpose of teaching in a far away place. Even one newspaper calls the teachers as martyrs. These news especially emphasize teachers' birthplaces or where their family live or where their funeral will be buried. In a way, teachers are constructed as the outsiders who had sacrificed their lives for a divine purpose. Furthermore, the teacher identity constructs how Van is a far far-away place

in Turkey's map. For instance, in the news headlined as "Teacher Melike's heart aching drama" close relatives living in Alanya state that "we were afraid of the terror, but earthquake took her" (*Habertürk*, 25 Oct. 2011, p.22) Basically, news discourse clustered around the teachers is similar to this example and there, Van is constructed as a distant geography, as a place full of terrors and danger that is very far and unknown. Consequently, news on teachers constructs the geographical and social distance as well as danger and terror associated with the geography.

When pity is produced it is channeled to actions of charity (Arendt 1963, Boltanski 1999, Hutchison 2014). The proper way of helping is established by the news around the closure points of mobilization, help or state of emergency. Here giving numeric information on the organization and distribution of the help aids is preferred to enhance the objective and informative effects of the discourse. Also metaphors are used to show how the amount is huge and limitless via news such as "help is raining to Van (*Milliyet*, 26 Oct, p.22), helps are like avalanche".

Likewise the popular method of income donation is ensured and triggered by organizing big events and concerts like Live Aid. The rock concert organized for Van was all over newspapers. Headlines were; "Rockers rocked for Van (*Yeni Şafak*, 31 Oct, p.2), "Many voices, one heart" (*Radikal*, 31 Oct.), "Culture world is standing up for Van" (*Sabah*, 28 Oct., p. 36), "Rockers united for Van" (*Milliyet*, 31 Oct.). Organizing charity concerts and live TV events are a concrete way of income generation to mobilize ordinary citizens who do not know where to donate or how to help. Mobilization of public is invited to donation campaigns and the collected amounts were declared in news to show how strong is the solidarity.

The pro-government and anti-government newspapers promote contradictory discourses on the news of mobilization efforts. Although all claim that Turkey as a

nation is mobilized, pro-government news focus on the success of the efforts of the government implying that everything is under control, whereas more oppositional newspapers criticize the deficiencies in state's mobilization efforts. *Yeni Şafak* newspaper used mobilization term most frequently, and according to the newspaper the subjects of the mobilization discourse are, brave people, the world, the state, the nation, the business world and *Kızılay*. The newspaper also announces a call of mobilization/state of emergency for urban transformation in Turkey. It is stated that almost 50% of buildings in Turkey are illegal, therefore new regulations and financial planning for a mass application of urban transformation should be mobilized immediately (*Yeni Şafak*, 28 Oct., p. 7).

Mobilization, state of emergency and help aids news bring us to another cluster of visuals that construct who the heroes are. In general, heroes are men in uniforms. Either policemen or gendarme assure order in aid distribution or protect vehicles carrying help aids. Moreover male figures become heroes by saving victims, helping children, or women. Rescue teams, the military, the gendarme or the police are male subjects to save and protect Van that is in a way feminized, portrayed in need or infantilized (Fig. 9 and Fig.10).



Figure 9 Male figures helping young female figure
Habertürk, 25 October 2011, Van'da Deprem Acısı section, p.22



Figure 10 Young female figure in between fault line visuals
Sabah, 25 October 2011, Economy and Finance section, p.8

As seen explicitly in Fig 9 and Fig 10, in some visuals the victims to be saved or helped are represented via very young female figures. In the first picture, there are four male soldiers helping a victim girl in Van, to restore order again. The second picture is the news in finance and economy section, that tells about the aiding organization of the state and big corporations. In the latter visuals of fake broken fault lines surround a victim girl. In *Disappearing Acts*, Taylor (1997) works on the gendered construction of the state via photographs to show how masculine positions are constructed to form a national identity. She argues that heroic military officers rescuing young women inspires steadfastness and embodies communal ideals of “we” that cling together to restore (Taylor 1997, p.9). To her, feminizing populations in representations makes military intervention look necessary even desirable (p.61).

To sum up, the nodal point of victimhood gets its closure two ways. One is based on universal concepts family love and loss of a family member. Here innocent children, mothers, sons, babies, teachers are the main identities and the ideal victims of the disaster news discourse. Through identification with the victims, unity and brotherhood is produced via shared feelings of pain. The other one constructs victimhood *en masse*, anonymous, distant and dangerous that is either in desperate need or looting. Here pity is the hegemonic closure point invited to cover the

ambivalences in the discourse. Also this group of news sets the limits and the unacceptable components in the brotherhood discourse. Furthermore male rescue teams or male figures are the heroes in uniforms who intervene, control, bring order, or save. These representations invite the audience to identify with the male figures who stage the sovereign's position, who help and save the ideal victims that are constructed via means of feminization, infantilization, innocence and depolitization.

3.2.3 Hopes, miracles, and materiality of objects

In his newspaper article *The Half-life of Disaster*³¹, Massumi (2011) states that after the initial breathtaking horror depictions of disaster (referring to tsunami in Japan), an affective corner starts to be turned: “from horror to heartwarming”. He underlines that after a couple of days, the event settles back to stabilization and invites to stable collective emotions, and then in almost two weeks the news fade away. In addition he claims that representing the event at personal level and human scale obscures the complicity at work between the human caused and the naturally caused elements related to the aftermath of disasters.

In the Van Earthquake, the news discourse that is articulated at the nodal points of miracle and hope focuses on individual stories, especially on the stories of the rescued victims; as frequently stated “when all the hopes were almost gone”. In general, miracle discourse in the news emphasizes the duration of victim's being trapped under the rubble and the hardness of team efforts to save him/her. Especially the news covered on baby Azra, who was born premature, weighed only 2.3 kilograms and had to wait to be saved for 48 hours, were mentioned in all of the

³¹ Retrieved in May 2017, from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/apr/15/half-life-of-disaster>

newspapers as a miracle. In a way, her being so gentle and vulnerable is contrasted with the huge damage caused by the disaster.

Yunus's dead is serviced as "bitter end of the miracle" (*Radikal* 26 Oct. p.9). News stating, "The name of miracle is Azra" (*Haberturk*, 26 October 2011, Pain in Van Special section); "only hope is the increase of miracles" (*Haberturk*, 26 October 2011), "two babies are saved, hope arrived again", "the day of miracle, pain and brotherhood" (*Star*, 25 October 2011 pp.14-15), "he narrated the miracle" (*Milliyet*, 29 October 2011, Yine Yıkıldık Special Section, p. 20) all describe individual stories of victims and rescue efforts linked with their stories. Furthermore objects such as drawers or curtains may be stated as props that save a life and be an actor/hero of this miracle discourse. In Yunus's case, the anonymous dead body as a material, which was covering his body to protect him, was emphasized as a tool of dramatization as well as described as a miracle. It can be argued that what is defined as miracle assumes the wounded victims already dead in the first place because the victims who does not have a chance factor unfortunately die under the rubble miserably. It also blurs deficiencies in rescue efforts, legitimizes that not much could be done, meanwhile normalizes that all needed are chance factors, fortune or miracles.

Therefore, miracle and hope theme mystifies. It erases the disaster's connection to the social, economical and historical conditions that prepare the disaster and forms a closure point that dislocates the material effects of the socio-political context. Furthermore it shapes the aftermath by relying on the concepts such as chance, fate, God's will, unpredictability of future and incalculability of natural events. Defining earthquake as unexpected and relying on miracles, constructs a truth claim that no one can never be ready for disasters, and when it comes one needs miracles. It also disconnects the disaster's relation to manmade factors and historical

conditions before, during and after the disaster. In this nodal point, we see a form of myth that inserts itself as a non-historical truth; and naturalizes the way things are (Rose, p.91). The vulnerability of human body combined with fate is the fundamental feature of this discourse. It contradicts with the discourse of progress that claims risks are always minimized, or represented as non-existent, during the colonization of the nature, such as in urban transformation discourse, and this ambivalence is covered with a discourse of chance and fate. But there are also exceptions, *Birgün Newspaper* questions this discourse and publishes articles such as; “earthquake does not kill but state does” (*Birgün*, 29 October, front page), “capitalist order is dependent on miracles (*Birgün*, 29 October, p.6).

With an anthropological perspective, centering on the Van earthquake and its aftermath, Schafers (2015) shows how the agency of material objects (ruins) can situate earthquake victims both in history and also in the future. Focusing on Ann Stoler’s conceptualization of “ruination as a series of patterned effects of governance”, that permeate the present and the uncertain future. Schafers emphasizes how the ruined materialities became central elements of governance, especially the damaged homes, collapsed buildings and state-commissioned damage reports with scientific and objective claims. Along with the recent disaster literature, the writer suggests that disasters are not random events but are embedded in social, cultural, economic and political continuities. Schafers further claims that there is no such thing as natural disaster but the “disastrous and ruinous effects of events are historically and politically produced” (Schafers, 2015, p.4).

Schafers (2015) starts her analysis with the effects of ruins in everyday life. She focuses on the everyday experience of living among the ruins or in the damaged houses and visually engaging with ruins after the Van earthquake. She underlines

how the modern imagination on human superiority over objects and things collapses when the materiality of objects and things act upon people (Schafers, 2015, p.7).

Blaming the nature, unpredictability of future, chance and destiny are the concepts inhabited to cover the gap.

In the aftermath of the disaster it was mentioned in various news that tent allocation was problematic. Some victims insisted that they were not receiving any help aids, although some news media was covered all over by news that helps were raining to Van. Allocation of tents became more critical as the weather conditions became harsher. Representations of long queues, news on queue fights, distribution of the high quality tents and low quality ones, the news that sets doubt on tent looters, tent black-market all indicate that there were deficiencies in allocation. Tent allocation turned out to be a crisis and earthquake victims started raising their voices on the issue. But their voices are seen as mere noises to be silenced in mainstream news media. There were rumors that citizens residing in municipalities ruled by the oppositional party, BDP, were discriminated in tent allocation. But the mainstream news discourse inhabited the contradictions in the discourse and claimed that everything is under control under a language of consensus. Tent allocation situates the victims both in the present and the future. Combined with the geography's history and the inhabitants' experience in relations with the Turkish state, Schaffer argues that the state is perceived "disastrous by nature", meanwhile the earthquake becomes a "political disaster". As Schaffers puts it; "dwelling safely in a material world subject to constant differential patterns of ruination, point to the ways in which material objects not only situate us in history but also in the future" (Schaffers, 2015, p.26). In line with Schafer's comments, the tent crisis to be represented as non-existent loomed larger than it appeared. It became more predominant in the near

future on matters such as allocation of high quality tents to pro-government municipalities, heating problems and tent fires, even hunger strikes not to leave tent towns.

This brings us to another cluster of news, which is centered on questioning the quality of destroyed buildings during the earthquake. As expected, the villain is assessed as either the buildings as non-human agents or the constructors themselves. In some news, buildings are personified directly as murderers or the constructors are represented as greedy people or thieves. To exemplify; “thief murdered again” (*Milliyet*, 25 Oct. 2011, front page headline), “will the constructors of murderer buildings account for?” (*Habertürk*, 26 Oct. 2011, Van’da Deprem Acısı Section), “thief constructors killed hundreds of people” (*Milliyet*, 28 Oct. 2011, p.1). In this cluster of news, building contractors or engineers are set as open target or condemns almost to be lynched. An example would be helpful to see how harsh the news can be. In the front-page news of *Haberturk Newspaper* (27 Oct. 2011), a picture of building contractor’s smiling face (probably taken sometime ago out of context) was serviced with a photograph of his villa. The news states that the building he had constructed was demolished in Ercis and had been the graveyard of 30. In contrast the triplex villa he is residing is very strong. Furthermore he has two Kızılay tents and a parked Mercedes and Audi car in his garden. The caption states; “Although the earthquake victims are crying for tents, the building contactor whose villa is strong, pitched up two tents in his garden”. Also the news hints whereabouts of this villa. Right down this news and his villa’s photograph, we see a long queue photograph serviced as “People from Erciş are sleeping in cold streets past four days, waiting for hours in long lines to get a tent”.

The only villain plainly addressed in the news is building contractors, which is reiterated various times. In the plot line of this discourse, greedy villains kill and innocents die. The explicit addressing of the villain leaves aside nothing to be discussed further concerning the socio-political aspects of the disaster. The patterns of vulnerability that are historically and politically produced (Shafers, 2015) are deduced to individual mistakes. At larger level this discourse is connected to state's up-coming discourse on application of new regulations regarding the housing policies. Neoliberal discourse of self-care of citizens, attributing responsibility to both the public and the individual deficiencies were at work in the news such as; "from public to contractors, everyone is responsible" (*Radikal*, 26 Oct. 2011, pp.16-17). The Minister of Environment and City Planning makes this statement who does not claim any responsibility and solidifies the discourse's blindness to the state's involvement in the process. Likewise, the Prime Minister avowed that; what is at stake is the votes when he declared that "even we lose votes, we will demolish illegal buildings". *Milliyet* newspaper headlines the prime minister in the front page with the news "we will demolish, without permission" (27 Oct. 2011). This discourse is soon embedded to the new *Afet Yasası*³² that became to force in May 2012, seven months later the Van Earthquake.

In *Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2008) Niomi Klein states that after each catastrophe the discourse of clean sheet becomes prevalent. In case of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, Klein underlines how the public school system is completely replaced by private charter schools. Klein calls it disaster capitalism where disasters are treated as "exciting market opportunities" (Klein, 2008, pp.5-6). He explains how the shock doctrine works: the original disaster puts

³² The New Legislation to transform risky areas; retrieved in May 2017, from: <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2012/05/20120531-1.htm>

the entire population into a state of collective shock, and shocked societies often give up things they would otherwise fiercely protect. The Van Earthquake had been the clean sheet in setting new reconstruction and housing regulations in Turkey. It can be argued that the new *Afet Yasası* has its foundations on this very news discourse that reiterates the real murderers are illegal, old, decayed housings. It is clearly seen in the declarations of the Prime Minister five days later the disaster. He stated, “The Van Earthquake is a litmus paper³³, it will be a mark in history. To avoid new catastrophes we will make a historical move; illegal buildings, *gecekondus* will be publicized and later demolished. The government will have full authority for it” (*Yeni Şafak*, 27 Oct. 2011, p.12).

3.3 Yunus Geray as the earthquake “icon”

Fate says the news, because he had arguments with his sister or friend, he left home went to Internet café, there he was caught to the earthquake. Dead’s cold hand was covering his body and it was a miracle that saved his life. He waited 10 hours under the rubble to be saved. Saving Yunus after long hours of rescue efforts made Turkey smile, although we were expecting a happy ending, an unexpected final took place. “Uphold Child! (*dayan çocuk*)” writes another newspaper. As he was out of the rubble, he became unconscious. Yunus’s heart could not hold on. He had internal bleeding says one, crush syndrome killed him writes another one. He was begging to the rescue teams “please save me” under the rubble. “Why could you not hold on?” writes another headline, “why did you leave us silently?”

His photograph is marked as the most tragic photo of the disaster. His famous iconic photograph was his only photograph, says his father in an interview in a

³³ Litmus paper metaphor is popularly used to underline that an event or crisis explicitly unveils the good and the evil. because when the paper meets acid, it turns red when it meets bases it turns purple, so an event makes explicit who is at which side.

follow up story. Journalists visited his family, asked for his other pictures, the father said he only had an ID photograph. His father states my black haired son wanted to be a football player. He was very hardworking, his teachers loved him so much, he was successful and he loved sports. Yunus was working without his father's knowledge. Again, he wanted to be a football player. Besides, Yunus had 9 siblings in his family.

He used to listen both Kurdish and Turkish songs, curse terrorism in his social media postings. He sent his brother to military service proudly, says the news, he was saving money in order to send some to his brother in the military says another. He was polishing shoes after school on the streets to save money says an article. Peace is the central topic discussed says another news; "we are trusting our brothers so long as they are fair", the brotherhood of fault line did not break. It is a day of miracle, pain and brotherhood says another headline. Another newspaper services his photograph covering half of the page captions that national mobilization is maintained. Another one declares "one wrist one heart" above his half page picture.

"Yunus's World" headlines another newspaper in the front page on Sunday. According to the news, Yunus's Facebook profile is like a summary of Turkish history. He listened to both Siwan Perver³⁴ and Emre Aydın. He shared songs for the memory of Turkish martyrs. Apparently he had other photographs in his Facebook profile, his picture under the rubble was not the only one, states the article. He wrote, "You don't worth loving and to be loved, unfaithful³⁵" under his profile picture, looks like he had a love life. His father works in constructions now and then if he finds any jobs; he has ten children, ten mouths to feed in total.

³⁴ A Kurdish popular singer born in Urfa, Turkey forced to live abroad for over 35 years.

³⁵ "Sen ne sevmeye ne sevilmeye değersin, vefasız", *Radikal*, Oct, 29, 2011

This is how one becomes an earthquake symbol. Yunus's personal life becomes the matter of interest to develop a character in a drama with a plot of crisis and resolution. Miracle turns to misery in the resolution part of this plot. Details on his personal life help to establish an ideal victim character. Later this ideal victim is embedded with the discursive articulations of national mobilization, peace, brotherhood, fatal buildings, miracle, fate and pain for a closure moment. A war against the rubbles and decaying buildings is declared at one hand, at the other, Yunus's photograph is used to imagine Turkey as a united whole, a body with feelings who mobilized for help through an affective economy of shared pain.

Finally, the gaze of the visual materials and discourse embedded in Yunus's photograph constitutes the east, Van, as underdeveloped and infantilized. The earthquake zone in Kurdish geography is associated with remoteness and danger. The language that constructs Kurdish subjectivities as members of over-crowded families, in poverty and deprivation, who are not educated, precariously labored is reproduced in the news discourse. Yet the black haired black-eyed 13-year-old poor Kurdish victim stuck under the rubble is the ideal brother to be saved and to get mobilized in this disaster discourse.

3.4 Assumed audience

Boltanski (1999), later also Chouliaraki (2004, 2006) discuss that there are three different types of audience reactions produced in representations of distant suffering. First is producing sentiment, in which the feelings are organized around the benefactor; second type is denunciation, in which the feelings are organized around the persecutor; and finally the sublime, in which the feelings are organized around the spectacle of suffering itself. In sentimental constitution, the concepts of humanity

and human sufferings are emphasized and feelings of pity, empathy are produced; whereas in denunciation justice is central with a constituted aura of strict objectivity and feelings of anger, indignation and revenge are produced accordingly. In the third type, the audience appreciates the aesthetics of the scene itself. Chouliaraki argues that the news on 9/11 that produced with “involved camera” moved the spectator right there in the scene of suffering produced an instantaneous proximity in the midst of dust, bricks that lead people creating sentimental feelings towards the victims. Whereas the news produced with multi-modal technologies of representation embedded with president Bush’s public statements produced feelings of denunciation that appeal to justice. On the other hand, the unusually long eight-minute shot of Manhattan skyline burning created a sublimation effect in which the spectator is not moralized, but the representation stayed with us as an experience of “aesthetic indulgence”. Chouliaraki sums that;

The complex space-time of the sublime, with its *anachronic* and *anatomic* effects, construes a moral horizon radically different from either of the previous topics (referred to denunciation and sentiment). Free of the urgent obligation, which the figures of benefactor and persecutor evoke, the *sublime* seems to rest upon the spectator’s reflexive contemplation on the scene of suffering. (Chouliaraki, 2004, p.194)

As shown in her article, different representations on the same event produce different levels of proximities and articulate different “space-time” combinations with different appeals. Therefore she concludes that, the spectators’ claims on knowledge of the event, emotions about it, and dispositions to act are all “truth effects”, and are not universal and ahistorical facts (Chouliaraki, 2004, p.195).

Chouliaraki (2006) concludes that rather than looking at footage as simply overtly propagandist representation that takes explicit sides, representations of distant suffering may articulate implicit moral norms that takes sides in the conflict without violating the principle of objectivity. To conclude, the spectator is not

invited to a regime of justice, or to a regime of care, but to the regime of the sublime aesthetic experience, where the actors are not regulated and everything seemed “objective” (pp. 278-279).

I argue that in the Van Earthquake the discourse formed on innocent ideal victims invite audiences to generate sentiment in which personal stories produce proximity between the citizens and the distant sufferer, therefore invite to compassion and care. Whereas justice is appealed in the murderer buildings discourse, villain is explicitly determined for revenge; that produced denunciation, in which the feelings are organized around the persecutor. Later, this discourse based on justice is embedded to new regulations in urban planning and construction. Moreover, in order to invite pity and legitimize military interventions, with the help of metonymy, Van is represented as a non-living collective entity, such as a city as a whole, whereas the persecutor is verbalized as non-human terms such as buildings with the use of passive voice that erase the agency and detach the proximity. In this discourse Van is saved.

The photographs released in the first few days of disaster showing the huge impact of disaster or the aerial shots of damage evoked horror and sublime experience in Boltanski’s terms. Yunus’s photograph also evokes a sublime experience when he was waiting under the rubble alive with “dead’s cold hand” over his shoulder. One day he was alive, he waited in patience for almost ten hours, he was looking at us while he was oscillating between the line of life and dead. He provided a sublime experience, a scene of suffering as aesthetic indulgence, of being stuck under the rubble for long hours. Later, his photograph is articulated with personification and dramatization to produce sentiment and identification. Through

that discourse he is constructed as the “ideal Kurdish earthquake victim brother” subjectivity.

3.5 Conclusion

Ranciere (2010) argues the police regulates the shared common, the sensory experience, what is visible, what can be heard and what cannot (Ranciere, 2010, p. 36). Alongside, in the constituted mainstream disaster news discourse of the earthquake, the hegemonic language of power and modes of symbolization strengthened what Ranciere calls consensus. Combined with politics of affect as the glue to erase histories and particularities, the disorder and politics are invited to consensual regulated actions. Solidarity itself is deduced to income generation and charity, expressed in monetary terms and in a delimited way. Victims themselves as the *demos* could rarely raise their voices, on matters such as uneven distribution of emergency aids, tent crises, the effects of demolition assessment reports, or on their representation on the news media. A vision of wholeness, Turkish and Kurdish nations as the brothers is the truth made universal. The non-brother is clearly identified, and a conditional wholeness delimited and shaped by the powerful and the hegemonic is reproduced.

It is also noticed that different forms of articulations coexist and compete with one another in the disaster news discourse. Terror and danger associated with the geography is defined, shaped and subjugated by the brotherhood, unity and state of emergency discourse at the last instance. Help and mobilization are articulated through individual victim plot lines that relied on politics of affects, pain sharing and compassion, that constructed a particular form of governed subjectivity. According to news, helps flooded to Van in contrast to crises in tent allocation and

discrimination among the municipalities in the distribution. News on looting defined the unacceptable brother and deficiencies in the aftermath organization are erased with everything is under control discourse, accusing the non-brother victim is produced and polemics over the common are silenced. Contradictory elements, slip away, irreconcilability of the particularities are invited the discourse of the consensus. As Ranciere puts it, consensus is not simply an agreement between parties but consensus describes the community as an entity that is naturally unified by moral principles. Struggle over meanings is solidified via moral claims of myths, mystifications, affects, metaphors and metonymies that constituted the unification.

Ideal victim subjectivities are constructed as the women, children and teachers. Among them especially news on teachers was announced as the most tragic ones. Why were they the most tragic? It is recognized that because teachers were working for a divine purpose of civilizing the nation in a remote geography of terror and poverty. It can be argued that the spatial and social detachment is set and solidified with the news on teachers. They also represented and constructed idealness in this geography of terror and danger. Their stories functioned to address to both remoteness and deprivation associated with the geography, which were absently present in the news texts.

Buildings and contractors are the villains and accusations are put on the buildings or construction firms explicitly. The socio-political complexities regarding the earthquake are deduced to a war against the rubbles. In regard to those villains, the rescue teams and men in uniforms are set as the heroes. This dichotomy of hero as rescue team and villain as non-human entities such as murderer buildings is later became the basis of the new regulations on urban transformation and planning

discourse. Yunus's state provides a sublime experience in this war against the rubbles and killer buildings.

The earthquake happened before the official beginning of the Peace and Resolution Process³⁶ in Turkey. It can be claimed that, the insistence on the brotherhood, unity and wholeness in the disaster news discourse is embedded with the Peace Process discourse at a broader level. In the discourse, the mainstream media news reproduced the privileged position of Turks over Kurds. A "we" is constructed as the inclusion of the other and uniting as "me". The non-brother is explicitly defined, and the east is established as dangerous, feminized, in need, deprived, non-civilized and remote.

Yunus's photograph shows the vulnerability of human body in contradiction of the huge damage caused by the earthquake. In this setting, the powerful and the governing staged how they manage to restore the detriments and damages. It can be argued that in the disaster news discourse, the audience is invited to identify with the powerful and hegemonic position of state via heroic male figures. Particularities of the social and structural problems are subsumed to the generalized liberal humanitarian premises of pity and charity.

Yunus is an earthquake "icon" whose face covered half-page of almost all of the newspapers after the earthquake. As discussed, in the disaster news economy, his photograph is used at various nodal points, where various signifiers and discourses were in antagonism. In general, in the disaster news discourse after the Van Earthquake, particularities and voids are silenced, and the closure points are

³⁶ In 2009, the AK Party government introduced public debate on a "Kurdish opening." This initiative ensured an in-depth discussion of the Kurdish question and carried the issue to the mainstream (Ensaroğlu, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2013, pp. 7-17).

connected to the discourses of humanitarianism, urban transformation and Peace
Process at a broader level.



CHAPTER 4

REPRODUCTION AND RECIRCULATION OF YUNUS'S PHOTOGRAPH

In the previous chapter, I located Yunus's photograph in the disaster news discourse through which he was constructed as the symbol when the earthquake was breaking news in the mainstream news media. This chapter follows another trajectory; the recirculation of Yunus's photograph in diverse contexts when media's attention to the event had diminished. I will briefly examine the photograph's usage in outdoor campaigns, in memorial campaigns, in political settings, in award ceremonies and finally returning back to Yunus's family as a gift. This recirculation phase has separate characteristics. First, it provides a basis for a discussion to see how a news photograph is reproduced by non-newsmakers. Furthermore, these employs of the photograph occurred when Yunus was already acknowledged to be the symbol of the earthquake, so such an elucidation provides insights on his fame's substantial effects on his family. Finally these occurrences are public events that gained a delineated news circulation for their own account. Therefore in this chapter, I elaborate how the image acquired new meanings in various venues, trace the effects reproduced in these new temporalities and spaces, meanwhile finalize my discussion on examining what it is to be an icon victim.

In her unpublished dissertation thesis Gürsel (2007) underlines that news photographs are "visual performatives" whose "force lie not merely in their meaning but also in the context in which the utterance is made" (Gürsel, 2007 p.35). She further states that the more an image circulates in networks, the more it is validated as much for journalistic credibility, as for aesthetic and political force. Not only

images circulate as truths, also they gain more value and credibility as they circulate. Additionally as a wire photograph circulates, it becomes inserted into many different contexts and presumably contributing to the production of many imagined communities (Gürsel, 2007 pp. 35-37). In this chapter I will discuss these new contexts when the Van Earthquake was no more breaking news.

4.1 Donation and memorial campaigns

After a couple weeks from the initial break of the event, Yunus's photograph emerged in two outdoor campaigns outside news production. One of them was a charity campaign to organize bulk donations of prefabricate houses to the region. The second campaign was organized for building of a forest in memory of the lost earthquake victims. Both of the campaigns took place in Diyarbakır; a politically engaged and mostly Kurdish populated city of Turkey.

The first campaign (see Fig.11) is organized by the Trade and Industry Center of Diyarbakır for collecting donations to buy prefabricates to the victims. Here Yunus's photograph is captioned with the sentence that states "Van; the moment our heart shattered (*Van, Yüreğimizin yıkıldığı an*)". At the center of the billboard it is stated "Diyarbakır is expressing its compassion (*Diyarbakır merhametini gösteriyor*)". The usage of the photograph is a typical example that benefits from aid advertising genre that quickly craves attention and aims to increase awareness with the victim displays. Generally speaking, in order to increase the amount of donations, a victim, mostly a child is portrayed as powerless, dirty, in need, or in deprived conditions to trigger emotional appeals as quick as possible.



Figure 11 Outdoor billboard in Diyarbakır (donation)
November 2011, Yunus Geray's well-known photograph is used and two men are passing by

Hutchison (2014) discusses that after the 2004 Asian tsunami an unusual transnational solidarity and support was summoned. She discusses that this was due to intensely emotional representation of trauma at one hand, and presenting deeply colonial depictions of the plight victims at the other (Hutchison, 2014, pp.1-2). She shows emotional sense of the viewers are prompted by pitiable pictures that depict victims at the most personal and vulnerable moments, supported by close-up pictures of the suffering (p.7). As already discussed, Yunus is fashioned as an “ideal victim” to be protected, who is young, vulnerable, a poor Kurdish boy of a poor crowded family. Therefore it can be claimed that the passive, lost, vulnerable victim in need is reiterated in this particular outdoor advertising. The subject of this representation is constructed as Diyarbakır, a city united, that is expressing its compassion; and the object towards action is taken is Van that is represented by a victim who is portrayed in its most personal and vulnerable moment. Yunus represents a city and his image is used to generate generic emotional appeals as quick as possible. His particularity is subsumed under a general condition named “earthquake victimhood”.

It goes without saying that Yunus's picture is used to enhance the dramatic effects of the campaign. It can be clearly recognized that the rest of the components of the billboard, other than his photograph, are produced in urgency and carelessly.

Even the caption written in Turkish is grammatically wrong (*bir prefabrik'te sen al*). The billboard solely relies on the power of the image, the symbol of the earthquake, and reproduces the mainstream news discourse in which Yunus was constructed as the ideal, powerless victim. It does not address the real conditions of the victims, nor provides information on why it is necessary to buy prefabricate houses, but aims to benefit from pre-fabricated emotional/affective appeals of the picture that have a constructed particular history.

The second campaign is organized by Diyarbakır Municipality so as to build a forest for the memory of the lost victims in Van (see Fig. 12). The billboard slogan borrows from the famous poem line “To live! Like a tree alone and free, like a forest in brotherhood (*bir orman gibi kardeşçesine*)” which is quoted from Nazım Hikmet, and is a very well known line. The billboard advertising further states “we will enliven what we have lost in Van by planting young trees”. It is not a donation or charity campaign but invitation for a shared experience after trauma sponsored by Diyarbakır Municipality. Here the concepts of brotherhood, togetherness and equality are constructed upon the metaphor of forest. It is a memorial, at the same time a ritualistic mourning experience to commemorate victims together. Instead of building cultural artifacts or monuments, building a lively forest is preferred to create a shared experience of participation. Also, in this campaign a submission and acceptance to what has passed is sensed and it is channeled to a ritualistic shared experience. The campaign has explicit references to cyclical nature of life and death, loss and life, where newborn equal trees are assumed to represent and enliven what is lost in the earthquake.



Figure 12 Outdoor billboard in Diyarbakır (memorial) November 2011, Yunus Geray’s picture and a plant are collaged, the relationship between them are visualized with the symbol of seismic waves.

With a similar emphasis, in this campaign Yunus’s image is used to connote the earthquake quickly. It confirms that as a visual material Yunus’s face represents the Van earthquake, it is the symbol of the event, an emblem of tragic loss. Here, his image is assumed to be a cultural material, a common visual in the collective repertoire of the public, a shortcut to represent victimhood, death, earthquake, loss and pain sharing.

Both usages of the image substantiate that Yunus as the victim symbolizes the earthquake, he represents a general state of victimhood regarding the incident, and as a visual material it is a force to trigger emotions and mobilize the public concerning the disastrous event. Both of the campaigns intensely relied on the image for the success of their campaign with the already existing constructed victimhood position of Yunus. Both of the campaigns reiterate the language of brotherhood and compassion discussed in the previous chapter and Yunus’s image, as the very well known symbol of the earthquake is expected to mobilize the feelings of compassion, pain sharing, pity and brotherhood quickly. In a way his image is the shortcut to associate these feelings, a material that requires no farther explanation. Similar to Ahmed (2014) suggests that the very surfaces of affective encounter become “sticky” or “saturated” with emotions that seem self evident and require no further

explanation, here Yunus as the earthquake icon becomes the saturated image of general concepts such as victimhood, brotherhood, solidarity, pity, equality and pain. In this way the particularity of his victimhood is erased, therefore these campaigns reiterate and speak from the constructed disaster news discourse of the mainstream news economy. Now I would like to discuss the particular experience that Yunus's family had after the earthquake.

4.2 Best photo of the year and Yunus's family

This section elucidates the impacts of Yunus's photograph on his family's particular experience of victimhood. In *Civil Contract of Photography* Azoulay (2008) states that during the encounter of the photographer and the photographed, the photographer is acknowledged as the right owner, merely by having the camera; and the photographed person is not, who relinquishes any rights or comments in advance. She underlines that this appropriation of rights, or exploitation, is "always a measure of violence" (Azoulay, 2008, p.105-107). She claims;

The photographer makes a living, and in some cases may even become wealthy, the photographer wins fame and prizes, is a member of organizations who defend his or her interests, is protected by publication contracts or agreements. The photographed individual on the other hand, is abandoned. He or she has no control over the image, in most cases is unable to determine its composition and the modes of distribution... he or she receives nothing in return except for being turned into a photograph... (Azoulay, 2008, p.107)

There had been a few encounters of the family and the photographer. One took place five months after the earthquake, when the photographer of Yunus's image, Ümit Bektas, won two prizes in the "Photographs of the Year Award" organized by Photojournalists Association of Turkey on March 2012. In the award ceremony, the former President of Turkish Republic, Abdullah Gül, gave the award to the photojournalist on stage. In addition to the president, many politicians and well-

known figures of the news making community attended the ceremony. It can be sensed that the prize is a prestigious one, and the ceremony was a public event enriched with public speeches. It should be kept in mind that the atmosphere was quite like a stage performance.

When Bektas was receiving his prize from the president, he stated “I hope we will take lessons, and hope that we wont be taking pictures like this anymore”³⁷. According to the news, after the photojournalist took his prize, the president commented a few words, and later Yunus’s family is invited to the stage (see Fig. 13). In the stage, the president gave some presents to Yunus’s young siblings. Later Yunus’s father made a few words in the stage. He mentioned that the family members are unemployed, asked jobs for himself and the elderly sons, meanwhile requested support for the education of the younger children in the family. Then the President commented, “we will handle them as well, we will not leave you unsupported” and he added, “I hope God will not let us feel such pain again”³⁸.



Figure 13 Photo of the year award ceremony March 2012, Yunus Geray’s family and the former President of the Turkish Republic on stage³⁹

³⁷ “İnşallah ders olur, bir daha böyle fotoğraflar çekilmez”, Ü. Bektaş, retrieved June 2017, from <https://www.haberler.com/vakifbank-tfmd-yilin-basin-fotograflari-yarismasi-3483243-haberi/>

³⁸ “Onları da yaparız ortada kalacak haliniz yok, Allah tekrar böyle acılar hissettirmesin”, A. Gül, retrieved June 2017, from <https://www.haberler.com/vakifbank-tfmd-yilin-basin-fotograflari-yarismasi-3483243-haberi/>

³⁹ Retrieved June 2017, from <http://www.abdullahgul.gen.tr/news/397/82467/2011-vakifbanktfmd-photos-of-the-year-award-ceremony-held.html>

The stage is an uncomfortable space for Yunus's family; a space constructed by the government that has certain dress codes, requires a certain manner of speaking, and provides a delimited time to express your comments, pain or feelings. The stage is not a space for the demos to speak but is a space for the governing to stage a performance. As seen, the father could comment a few words on their situation and the ceremony went on. By the end of the ceremony, the head of the jury committee commented on Yunus's photograph and about the situation of his family as follows:

The warm look of Yunus Geray captured by Reuters photojournalist Ümit Bektaş, infiltrated from the rubbles to the members of the whole jury. Just as it did to people's hearts when it was published in various newspapers, magazines, television channels, and social media... As the photograph of Yunus published, aiding and involvement of the public to the earthquake increased. At the end, Yunus could not survive; his heart could not bare the heaviness of the rubble, but with the help of the NGOs and the state Yunus's family moved to Ankara.

In a similar vein, during our in-depth interview with the photojournalist on the impact of the photograph and the aiding the family received, Ümit Bektaş commented that;

The life of the family changed. Someone's tragedy might become other's salvation. Because I took Yunus's photograph it turned out to be beneficial to the family. The president made necessary arrangements to move the family to Ankara, they gave a house to them, they gave a job to the man, Yunus's sister is going to school I guess. The family moved to Ankara, may be Yunus's siblings are in İzmir. İzmir Trade Organization was also planning to help the family, maybe they sponsored their education costs, or something like that (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 2016).

It is seen that in both comments rather than solving local problems and the particular needs of the family, being moved to Ankara, to the capital of Turkish Republic, is seen as the formula of salvation. "Saving" the family from poor, deprived periphery to the center of civilization, confirms that not much can be done to the victims who do not have the chance to move to Ankara. It can be argued that these speeches address that many victims are left alone trying to survive and change their fortunes

with their own efforts in the earthquake zone. As far as stated in the news, Yunus's family did not request to move to Ankara, but only requested job offerings and educational support. Therefore it can be claimed that the suggested recovery method imagines the disaster geography a zone of unemployment, deprivation and low quality education five months after the disaster. In a way, ignoring systematic deficiencies and the particular needs of the disaster zone becomes the norm. Furthermore transforming the distant other to someone similar to me establishes how a saving should be. The "already deprived now chaotic far-away place" should be left, forgotten, and a fresh start should be in the center, in the heart of the civilization. In addition, Yunus's tragedy is represented as a form mystical self-sacrifice to save his family. It can be argued that connotations on self-sacrifice enhance the idea that a divine justice or balance is naturally taking place, and his family is imagined to be safe and secure in this narrative. Now I would like to discuss the conditions Yunus's family experienced after they moved to Ankara.

Spoiler alert... The family's adventure in Ankara did not go well as assumed. In September 2012, eleven months after the earthquake, the family moved back to Erciş and Yunus's thirty-year-old brother Ender summarized the family's experience in Ankara to some newsmakers. He stated that, in such a big city like Ankara, they had to survive in very difficult conditions. Initially, a benevolent couple provided housing to the family, but in a very distant and segregated mass housing area, almost outside the city. As Yunus's brother puts it; no one plainly helped them except moving them to Ankara and paying the initial rent a few months for the housing. He stated:

Government officials did not pay a visit nor officially reached us; we attempted to reach them. Their doors are always shut. It is not enough to claim that they are taking care of us in front of the media. Concrete action is needed. Unfortunately every door we knocked was shut. We contacted the

Presidency, the Ercis Municipality, and the Ercis Province. It is stated that, if the presidency is not taking any action, no one can. (www.evrensel.net).⁴⁰

In another interview he added;

When our pain was fresh, we are pushed to strife to survive in an unknown city. I found my job via İş-Kur, and my brother started working in construction. It would have been better if we had not left our homeland. From the rent of the house to the bills we had to pay every expense in Ankara on our own. Public figures only ensured their own advertising/public relations. (www.vansiyaseti.com)⁴¹

Furthermore, in another news on October 2012 Yunus's brother stated that "they are not beggars", but only asked for decent jobs (Radikal). Likewise Yunus's father underlined that if anyone is interested in to ease their difficulty, his elder sons were still looking for jobs. He confirms that no one attempted to help them in Ankara, but they were left alone and had to turn back to their homeland, to Erciş. Even acquiring the money to move back home was not stress-free. As it can be seen, in contrast to what is staged in the political ceremonies or in award speeches the family could barely survive in the big capital of Turkey. In contrast to the extreme visibility of Yunus's image and over-exposure of news on the conditions of his family, the particular needs of the family, perceived as noises, as Ranciere puts it, which cannot be heard at all. Here in the totalizing field of consensus, voices of demos, Yunus's family is not included in any decision making processes, and they cannot be heard at all. Therefore as Ranciere suggests, "politics is reduced to policy making" and a form of governing.

⁴⁰ Bırakın bir devlet yetkilisi gelip bizi görsün ya da sorsun, biz kapılarına gidiyoruz. Kapılar yüzümüze kapanıyor. Medyanın önüne çıkıp bunu yaptık demekle olmuyor. İcraat lazım. Maalesef hangi kapıyı çalsak yüzümüze kapandı. Cumhurbaşkanı, Erciş kaymakamlığı, Erciş belediyesine başvurduk, hepsi yüzümüze kapandı. Cumhurbaşkanı bir şey yapmıyorsa kimse birşey yapamaz denildi. Retrieved from: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/35745/akpnin-yunus-sovu-da-fos-cikti>.⁴⁰

⁴¹ Acımız yeniye bilmediğimiz bir yerde yaşam mücadelesi veriyorduk. Ben İşKur üzerinden iş buldum, kardeşim inşaatta çalışmaya başladı. Kendi yurdumuzdan bir yere gitmeseydik daha iyi olurdu. Evin kirasından faturalarına kadar her şeyi biz karşıladık. İnsanlar kendi reklamını yaptı. Retrieved from: <http://www.vansiyaseti.com/van/yunusun-ailesi-sadece-reklam-var-baska-birsey-yaptiklari-yok-h3543.html>

Furthermore, in this arena of consensus, victims are no more perceived as specific people with particular needs -in our case, as a crowded family looking for jobs- but as a homogeneous group of poor people who are assumed to be satisfied with whatever offered. The family is made to say that they are not beggars. The politics of pity constitutes a hierarchical relationship with the victims to receive charity. Similar to Malkki's (1996) suggestions on universal humanitarian subjecthood as a category, which is constructed as depoliticized and ahistorical; the family's victimhood is generalized as an objectified universal way of being. In another words, the gaze of the center or the west is blind to historicize the family's particular victimhood subjectivity. The family becomes an object of totalizing humanitarian discourse and pity.

In a similar vein, working on the representation of victims in 2004 Asian Tsunami and the huge mobilization of charity in the aftermath, Hutchison (2014) discusses that particularity of specific victims and their agency are subjugated to a particular totalizing humanitarian conception. She states:

By focusing on the disabling dimensions of local experiences of the disaster, the images support the identification of victims as helpless, devoid of resources, and critically, the agency required for an effective response. As such, the images resonate with historically entrenched ideas that have, since the advent of imperialism, been associated with the developing world: that survival and prosperity is contingent upon Western assistance. Ensuing understandings of the humanitarian situation would consequently be based not merely on a conception of victims' needs but on the sense that power and benevolence that emerges from the imperative and ability to help. (Hutchison, 2014, p. 8)

Yunus's family's survival is imagined to be contingent to western assistance, in a format the western wishes to be. Their distinct voice cannot be heard in contrast to the tremendous visibility of his photograph in the news media, even the image won the most prestigious prize and became visible to highest rank politicians and technocrats in the country. Just like Yunus's image has been, in the ceremony

Yunus's family became the objects of pain and pity. In the ceremony, Yunus's tragic story is reiterated but still the real life conditions of the pictured, the voice of demos cannot be heard. Therefore there exists a major gap outside and inside the frame. The image's force is delimited to be an object of pain, while only recognized with a particular gaze; the gaze of the civilized, the gaze of the governing or the gaze of the benevolent. Sara Ahmed (2014) states that the relationship constructed upon pain does not position the reader/audience and the victim in relation of equivalence. She underlines that in most cases what is promised is not overcoming the pain of others but empowering the readers. The idea is that victim's pain can only be overcome "when the Western subject feels moved enough to give" (pp.21-22). Here in our case, the language of pity, pain constructs a benevolent, powerful, self-confident benefactor yet who is deaf to the voices of real subjects in the very contact zone. Therefore, the object of pain, namely Yunus's family, and the subjects who are moved by their pain are hierarchically constituted. Being governed and becoming the object of pain at one hand, and staging the performance of the governance, actions of charity centered on constructing a subject who is benevolent at the other are hierarchically constituted. Unfortunately, this relationship has nothing to do with reducing the pain of the distant sufferers, but encapsulates them as objects of pain that make them feel almost like beggars in the encounter.

In his book *Humanitarian Reason*, Fassin (2012) addresses to a paradox that the politics of compassion is a "politics of inequality" where moral sentiments are focused on the poorest and the most vulnerable individuals. At the same time it is a "politics of solidarity" where others are recognized as fellows. He argues that the tension between the "inequality and solidarity" relies on the relationship between the receiver and the benefactor as unequal. In most cases, receivers are always obliged to

show gratitude, or expected to show their personal stories over and over. Therefore humanitarian attention requires humility of the beholden (Fassin, 2012, pp.3-4).

Yunus's family felt humiliated with the humanitarian attention.

Azoulay (2008) states that rather than being citizens, which is a concept defined by the state with certain privileges, the "governed" is the umbrella term that unites, that defines a duty towards one another. Furthermore she problematizes the terms like empathy, pity, compassion, mercy or shame, which are loaded with histories and hierarchies (Azoulay, 2008, p.17). On the other hand the totality of governed is a new political theory of citizenship, a new framework that is not constituted by the sovereign or its gaze. The governed enables the political sphere as a space of relations; the governed are equal in their relation to the governing, and to each other. Azoulay also underlines that there exists a hierarchy among the citizenship status such as, the less privileged citizens, the less governed citizens who are the less entitled to protection or are systematically neglected, also there are the non-citizens such as the refugees. Therefore she suggests that being governed is "a status that precedes any distinction" (Azoulay, 2008, pp.32-33).

Similar to Azoulay's suggestions, Yunus's family is recognized but by a governing western civilized gaze, not as an equal member of the governed. Therefore, here the particular experience of Yunus's family, although being extremely visible and popular could only help to reproduce a western gaze on the victim family. The photograph as a material became a force to change the family's life, but materialized as a popular commodity to be used in political public ceremonies. Therefore it can be suggested that empathy, pity, pain or compassion not necessarily establish active subjects, nor reduce the pain of others but rather produces their objects.

4.3 A gift to the prime minister

Finally I want to discuss Yunus's photograph's travel in another public ceremony, where it is framed and given as a present to the prime minister of the Turkish Republic of that period. In this particular circulation, the image is acknowledged and emerged as a valuable present to be given in political ceremonies.

On July 2012, nine months after the earthquake, a general congress in the city of Van is organized by the ruling party's (Justice and Development Party, JDP) city council. The former prime minister and the leader of the governing party attended this ceremony where Yunus's image in a golden-like frame is presented to the Prime Minister (see Fig. 14). Regarding the present, the Van JDP council Abdullah Aras stated "I gave this photograph to the prime minister in order to remind the pain Turkey has gone through and get prepared to future earthquakes, so that children like Yunus's don't die any more⁴²".



Figure 14 JDP General Congress in Van
July 2012, The Prime Minister and JDP City Council on stage

Yunus's image is once again assumed to be a universal reminder of pain regarding to a general condition of victimhood in Van. As usual, he is acknowledged as the symbol of pain, an intensified surface whose particular history and subjectivity is erased and became saturated with affect. The feeling, namely pain, becomes a

⁴² "Türkiye geçmişte yaşanan acıları unutmasın, depreme hazırlıklı olsun, başka Yunuslar ölmesin diye bu fotoğrafı başbakanına hediye ettim", İHA, retrived June 2017 from <http://www.gazetevan.com/Arastan-Basbakana-Anlamli-Hediye----Van-Haberleri-52984.html>

fetishistic ahistorical emotion, and a quality that self-evidently resides in the object, in the image, in line with Ahmed's (2014) suggestions "through an erasure of history of their production and circulation" (Ahmed, 2014, p.11).

Though the city council was ensured on the effects produced by this affective surface, this particular reframing of the image left many in ambivalence since the tragedy of Yunus often associated with pain and suffering considered contradictory with the poses of the political figures that were smiling. This was a major ambivalence, left many indecisive on the meaning of this reproduction. It raises questions on the uses and distribution of suffering images, on how one should approach to such saturated images of pain, or on the limits of a photograph's physical usages. For instance, during our in depth interview, the photojournalist who took Yunus's photograph commented on the occasion as follows:

I think this is a very serious communication *accident*, a mismanagement of communication in Turkey. The personnel of the prime minister who deal with such stuff should have avoided this from happening. I told them, I have friends who are his photographers, and they are my friends. This should have not happened, now there is no way to fix this. I find this *ridiculous*, my first reaction was *laughing* at it. This was *unnecessary* indeed... I don't think the prime minister was involved in this. Someone gave it to him, he accepted. If they had given him the photograph of Hoşap Castle, lets say, we would see the same frame, and it would not mean anything. (italics are my emphases, Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February, 2016)

Accidental, unnecessary, ridiculous, laughter... These keywords are reminder of Bataille's discussions on the subversive images. As summarized by Noys (2000) Bataille underlines that violence is present what presents itself as civilized non-violence. Bataille tackles and subverts the most "normal" images, such as wedding ceremony pictures of bourgeois families, in order to discuss the inherent naturalization effects. To him an image is split by the violence that stabilizes it. Moreover, a wedding ceremony picture might be more subversive than a slaughterhouse image because while a slaughterhouse image shows explicit violence,

a wedding image in a bourgeois house hides the history of violence that fixes its legitimacy. So, conventional images that contain contradictory characteristics of laughter and fear, hateful and ugly require scrutinizing with irony. He compares the difference between a slaughterhouse image and his ancestors' family pose in a wedding, by asking why the exhibition of the former is banned while the latter is an honorable cultural artifact (Noys, 2000, pp.20-22). To him both require equal elucidation.

It can be suggested that the reframed image of Yunus in this political ceremony, while aimed to be fixed as an object of pain, slips away from the frame and unsettles its prior meanings. It changes the boundaries of the former connotations that were fixed around the themes on suffering and pain, which now contradictorily produces laughter, ridiculousness, or seems accidental or unnecessary. In contrast to the legitimized, normalized, intelligible or sensible historical formations of framing, staging, posing or gaze the new image is unprecedented, unexpected, contradictory to the produced and imposed ways of seeing. This major ambivalence provides the basis for naming the image as ridiculous, insensitive, or unnecessary. It is not sensible. An attempt to ignore it, getting irritated by it unfixes its meaning or location in the sensible regime. Because it is accidental and unprecedented it is an event in the symbolic regime of the visible as well. Historically constructed, seemingly self-evident affective connotations stick on the image are now floating and searching for new meanings. It is a subversive image of ambivalence and contradiction that invites to denial.

But what is accidental, irritating or uncomfortable with the new usage of the image? First it reminds us that even it frames suffering; it is a visual material, an artistic product that can be framed, and as an object there are various forms of using

it. Second, it can be suggested that this image makes explicit the politics inherent to posing therefore makes the invisible gaze, the pose and the stage of the governing explicit. By doing that, it reminds that we are all governed and are objects of affective production. Now I will briefly discuss my points.

Ümit Bektaş, the photographer of the image comments on the material reproduction and souvenir value of his images as follows;

I gave one of my photographs to my friends the other day, they told me they liked very much. Then I reflected about it. You cannot hang it on your wall in your house. This one. (*Shows me the image; two refugees, a father and a son almost begging for food supply behind barbed wire*) Probably my friends would not be able to figure out where to hang it. Maybe they did maybe not. I don't know... This is a news photograph. Maybe one can hang it on his/her office wall... (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 2016)

Can images of pain and suffering be gifts, or how and where can they be used? Are they commodities of the news making market, or cultural products with artistic value, or solely the window through which we see the world? In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag (2003) underlines that the emblems of suffering as secular icons circulate so diversely that being fully responsive them cannot be guaranteed. In our case, it can be argued that the golden frame as an object has effects on the outcome. It signifies that this frame is not only a contact zone between the viewer and the sufferer but is the determinant of the relationality between the two. Frame as a material acquires agency to determine the possible uses of the image and to define the contact zone. Therefore it reminds us that the image inside that frame is a material, an object of pain to embellish walls. Yunus's gaze addressed toward the viewer breaks with the frame and unsettles the stage of the governing.

This brings us to discussions related to politics of posing. Feldman (2006) criticizes the realist percept, to him which should be deconstructed via surrealist readings so that the gaze, frame and posing become tangible. Feldman (2006)

underlines that during the performance culture of the pose, visual subjects become depictable, or intelligible and sensible. Furthermore, posing is a freezing and rigidification process that is submitted to a gaze. To him, politics of pose is both a “bearer of ideological codes and a state of embodiment in which social fictions are rendered tangible and literal” (Feldman, 2006, p.443).

In the final circulation of Yunus’s image the pose of the politicians indicate that indifferent to the material exchanged, the pose is fixed, and it is a part of an aesthetic project of the governing. We would have seen the same posing, the photojournalist says, if the politicians exchange an image of Hosap Castle. The pose signifies that there is a staged performance addressed to a specific gaze. It can be argued that this staging of performance is designed to see the governing self-sufficient, in control and powerful. The viewer’s percept is constructed as to see the governing in full control. Therefore this particular gaze produces both its viewers and the framed as its objects. Nonetheless the efforts to fix the norms of pose, staging or gaze is unsettled by the presence of Yunus. They become tangible, visible and irreconcilable with Yunus’s presence since they contradict with the eyes of the victim that is objectified as an emblem of suffering. The staged performance, the frame, the pose all become tangible and in contradiction with the look addressed upon the viewer because Yunus invites the governed to a civil contract. Therefore Yunus’s look addressed to the viewer acquires a new meaning in this recirculation.

To conclude, Yunus’s initial photograph is not a product of pose, but in the second frame it is reframed with several poses in a contradictory manner. With the presence of pose, the photograph turns into a performance of staging. The viewer is left in ambivalence between the two looks, namely Yunus’s and the prime minister’s. Two irreconcilable looks are stuck in the same frame. Therefore Yunus’s look

addressed upon the viewer disturbs the pose, slips away from the frame, and dislocates the stage of the governing.

Earlier in this chapter, I quote from Azoulay (2008), stating that the photographed receives nothing in return, except for being turned into a photograph. After all, what is left is a photograph of Yunus to his family (see Fig.15). I would like to leave the final words to the photojournalist who took Yunus's photograph. When I asked him about his reactions to the circulation of Yunus's image, he said;

When my photographs start circulating some make me feel fine. For instance the help aids, earthquake campaigns, they are fine. I would provide the image if they'd asked me. You are conducting a scientific research; I say how can I help you. If a politician asks for my photograph to give to the prime minister as a gift, I would tell him "think twice". None of them asked me any way. But Yunus's mother did, she said, "I don't have any picture of my lost boy". I have applied Photoshop, cleared the dust on Yunus's face, erased the dead person's hand above his shoulder, printed and sent it to the family. In the award ceremony she hugged me, and said, "you have taken the only picture of my boy, thank you". I was moved, but my reactions are trivial anyway. (Ü. Bektaş, personal communication, February 2016)



Figure 15 Yunus's father is holding his son's image
The frame given as a gift to his family by the photographer.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

I was curious to search the processes of becoming a cultural icon, a symbol of a disaster and an object of pain. Following a photograph's trajectory, I discovered the multilayered relationships that shape a disaster and a cultural product of collective memory. I laid emphasis on the objective and subjective levels of violence held during the Van earthquake and its aftermath, connected them to the discourse that shaped the disaster in a remote Kurdish geography. The handling of racial discrimination and hate discourse widespread in the public contrasted explicitly with the harmony in national mainstream newsmaking. There, I recognized that a disaster happened in a Kurdish geographical area is an *event* that unsettles and risks the existing regimes of the visible and sensible.

The issue was connected to numerous ends; from politics of pity and affect to unnaturalness of disasters, from professional dynamics of newsmaking to formerly ongoing Peace Process in Turkey, from issues related to representation of the suffering to nation-building after critical events. Lefebvre says, "the history of a day includes the history of the world and of civilization" (Lefebvre, 2000, p.4). Thereby, I opened up a discussion on the days following the disaster, and I selected the overlooked, the explicitly visible as my field of research. Such a research aim was puzzling, thereby challenging and yet attractive.

The overlooked is the place of conjuncture that is full of gaps, cracks, contradictions, and excess, therefore it is the place to see the clash of discourses and formation of the self-evident. I was curious to excavate how those cracks,

ambivalences or excesses were covered, normalized, legitimized, became consistent, thereby sensible in the aesthetic regime. Furthermore, because of the racial dimension, the earthquake as an event was also staking the concepts such as humanitarianism, hierarchies in citizenry, bare life, grievability, distant suffering, and objects of pity and pain. In addition, I examined how the earthquake is related to nature - culture divide and the discourse of continuous progress. It is argued that human contribution to disasters is erased in the cultural representation of disasters, where chance factors, divine ends or destiny are emphasized to cover the problems that arise during colonizing the nature.

Rose and Tolia-Kelly (2012) approach to visuality as an orientation of research practice that is inevitably critical and constantly reflexive of the power play between “representation, text, practice, technologies of production, display, and performance” (Rose & Tolia-Kelly, 2012, p.3). In this thesis, I internalized their approach and analyzed the context of the event, the practices concerning the earthquake victims, the processes behind the image and news production, and performances and effects of representations, texts and discursive formations. I traced how communities and “objects of pain” are imagined, projected and constructed during production and circulation phases.

In the second chapter, I discussed the commodification process of Yunus’s photograph. Therein, I discovered the hierarchies that position an image as a material in the economy of news production. It is seen that, as a professional eye, the photojournalist who took the photograph knows the demands of the disaster photography genre and can be claimed that it is a matter of political suitability to choose which objects of suffering will be visualized. He predicts and calculates what a frame would do, how it would be used in particular conjunctures, or how an

assumed audience would react to it. Furthermore, Yunus's picture as an object of pain is selected to meet the expectations of professional journalism field. Yet the calculation or commodification processes seem to start at the very moment of shooting an image. In addition, I discovered that news and photographs of disastrous events have hierarchy between them and this hierarchy can be expressed and diagnosed numerically. Moreover visual materials have hierarchy between them as well, and they can be homogenized, categorized and taxonomized during the production phase.

Finally, it is seen that the photographer internalizes a particular form of success definition and legitimizes the requirements of the journalism field with the help of artistic components of the medium. On the other hand, he switches to a cynical discourse that reproduces the myth of "this is how things should be", which de-historicizes, naturalizes and simplifies complex power relationships and obscures the histories attached to them. Gürsel (2007) underlines that making visible is a network of labor processes that produce very particular visual commodities (Gürsel, 2007, p. 198). Herein, I saw the labor processes and norms of the journalism field behind the production of an earthquake icon's image.

In the following chapter, I laid emphasis on the performance of Yunus Geray's image in mainstream print news discourse in the following week of the earthquake. Thereby, the ideal victim subjectivities are constructed as the women, children and teachers. Among them especially news on teachers was announced as the most tragic ones. It is recognized that teachers were portrayed as self-sacrificers who give up their lives for a divine purpose of civilizing the nation in a remote geography of terror and poverty. Their stories functioned to address to both

remoteness and deprivation associated with the geography, which were absently present in the news texts.

Building contractors are the villains and accusations are put on the buildings or construction firms explicitly. The socio-political complexities regarding the earthquake are deduced to a war against the rubbles. In regard to those villains, the rescue teams and men in uniforms are set as the heroes. This dichotomy of hero as rescue team and villain as non-human entities such as murderer buildings is later became the basis of the new regulations on urban transformation and planning discourse (New Legislation for Urban Transformation, 2012). Yunus's state provides a sublime experience (providing pain and pleasure) in this war against the rubbles and killer buildings.

Solidarity itself is deduced to charity. Victims themselves as the *demos* could rarely raise their voices, on matters such as uneven distribution of emergency aids, tent crises, the effects of damage assessment reports, or on their representation in the news media. A vision of wholeness, Turkish and Kurdish nations as the brothers is the truth made universal after this critical event in the mainstream media. The non-brother is explicitly defined as the looters or the terrorism supporters, where the east is established as dangerous, feminized, in need, deprived, non-civilized and remote. The earthquake happened before the official beginning of the Peace and Resolution Process in Turkey. It can be claimed that, the insistence on the brotherhood, unity and wholeness in the disaster news discourse is embedded with the Peace Process discourse at a broader level.

It is also noticed that different forms of articulations coexist and compete with one another in the disaster news discourse. Terror and danger associated with the geography is shaped and subjugated by the brotherhood, unity and state of

emergency discourse. Help and mobilization are articulated through individual victim plot lines that relied on politics of affects, pain sharing and compassion. According to news, helps flooded in Van, in contrast to crises in tent allocation and discrimination among the municipalities in the distribution. News on looting defined the “unacceptable brother” whereas deficiencies in the aftermath organization are erased within “everything is under control discourse”. Blaming the non-brother victim is the preferred method to explain the deficiencies in general, and therein polemics over the common are silenced. Irreconcilability of the particularities are invited the discourse of the consensus and are de-historicized. Struggles over meanings are solidified via moral claims of myths, mystifications, affects, metaphors and metonymies that constituted the unification.

Finally, I discussed how the image acquired new meanings in its final circulation. Here politics of posing, posture, gaze, and the frame as a material became more explicit and visible, meanwhile I found the ground to discuss how inside the frame and outside of it can be examined. There I argue that Yunus’s family’s real situation confirms that Yunus’s image has material effects on the family, whereas noisy voices of the demos, cannot be heard at all. It can be suggested that like Yunus, his family is also constructed as objects of pain.

Working on images of 2004 tsunami, Hutchison (2014) shows stereotypical and deeply colonial representations of developing world suggestive of politics of pity. Thereby, the developing world is portrayed as dark, primitive, and powerless. Hutchison underlines that images manage this by focusing on individual faces and truly traumatic situations and crucially the passivity of local victims. In this way disaster is humanized, victims are objectified that render them vulnerable, devoid of agency and dependent (Hutchison, 2014, p.8). It can be argued that in the Van

earthquake this deeply colonial gaze is reproduced. The real voices of the real victims could not be heard, they became non-intelligible, insensible.

A photograph as an aesthetic object invited to a discussions on both politics of affect and visibility. I tried to engage with Sara Ahmed's (2014) approach on construction of the object and the subject in the affective encounter. There, I traced effects of seemingly the self-evident presence of pain and attempted to historicize it in the particular earthquake context. As a result, I argue that Turkey is constructed as the active subject, whereas Van is represented as feminized, passive, chaotic and submissive. Furthermore, I always kept in mind Azoulay's suggestions on photography as a contact zone, therefore throughout the thesis, I traced how a *governing* gaze is constructed, staged and protected to represent the *governed*.

While I laid much attention to formation of consensus throughout the thesis, dissensual performances, interventions or noises to consensus, are noticed at many levels as well. It can be claimed that, the initial racist discourse of hate that led some citizens to send stones in packages initiated the hegemonic governing discourse to emphasize concepts such as brotherhood, wholeness and unity of nation. The hunger strike of container city residents that took place in late summer 2013 can also be considered as an example to intervene the housing policies and criticize the handling of the disaster in the aftermath. When I solely focus on the core matter of the thesis, the sensual and aesthetic realm concerning the economy of Yunus's image, two dissensual performances are remarked. First, took place during the speech of Yunus's family, in the staged "photography of the year" award ceremony. There the family rejects to be solely objects of pain, which is invited to talk more and more about their suffering experience. It can be claimed that, there, they break with the suggested language on consensus of pain, instead particularly define their needs and

raise their voices that they only need decent jobs in order to continue living. I argue that, they reject to be objects of pain of the governing gaze, and attempt to break with the consensus while voicing their particular victimhood experience.

Secondly, I suggest that another dissensual occasion takes place in the political ceremony, where Yunus's photograph is given to the prime minister. As discussed, Yunus's look addressed towards the audience breaks with the staged performance and the frame. His look contradicts with the stage, the pose or the frame, makes them tangible and explicit, therefore stakes the realism imposed. There he invites the governed to a civil contract again. Thus, I argue that these two occurrences break with the harmony and directly address to the governing gaze, the staged ceremony of the sovereign, risk the realism conveyed by the photographic medium, and therefore unbalance the aesthetic regime. I suggest that the sensible in this regime privileges Turks over Kurds, sides with the benevolent rather than the victim, therefore constructs a governing, male, colonial gaze. In contrast, all these dissensual performances remind us the fact that; each and every encounter of emotions should be particularly historicized (Ahmed, 2014), and the governed should not look at each other via the constructed governing gaze (Azoulay, 2008).

As Ahmed (2014) suggests; multicultural love involves assimilating others into itself, to make itself 'like itself' (Ahmed, 2014, p.137). The brotherhood, unity and wholeness discourses of the earthquake idealize the relationship between the two ethnic groups and work as a form of conditional love. It provides the nation an opportunity to identify with virtuous feeling of doing the right thing on this unfortunate day in spite of the mistakes the other party done in the past. This brotherhood bond is dependent on a projected "we" imagined similar to me. Not the politically active earthquake victims, or threatening others but the ordinary suffering

citizens, such as children, women, or teachers who are assumed to be less political or “innocent” deserve to be called as the acceptable victims. Yunus’s figure perfectly fit to this discourse.

Keeping in mind the overall discussions, I further argue that, production of a particular ahistorical victimhood in recent critical incidents of Turkey; such as in Uludere (2011), the Van Earthquake (2011) or the Soma mine explosion (2014), are components of the same visual and aesthetic regime. Thereby, the suppressed are objectified as passive and fragile, where their voices are heard as mere noises. In his article on necropolitics, Mbembe (2003) discusses contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death, creation of “death worlds” and the status of “living dead” in certain geographies (pp.39-40). To me, in Turkey, these disaster zones are death worlds, and the discursive processes behind the creation of objects of pain and representation of them can be thought as indicators of nation building via necropolitics.

For further analysis, I suggest a comparative study with the Kocaeli (Marmara) Earthquake that occurred in 1999. I believe such a study would contribute to a more explicit analysis of formations of violence in the social life of disasters. Such a temporal and spatial shift would open up many discussions on being a Turkish versus Kurdish victim, the construction of disaster discourses in the east and the west of Turkey, or the center and periphery of Turkey, be helpful to lay emphasis on the pre- Justice and Development Party context of handling disasters with, JDP governed disasters etc. Furthermore, I believe this thesis can further be extended with a comparison of other disasters, such as with the Soma mine explosion (2014). Thereby, discussions on man-made, nature made factors as well as formation and affects of fate or destiny discourses would be crystal clear.

In addition, this study could be further extended to analyze in detail, the invisible labor processes behind the production of visibility in Turkish context, as Gürsel (2007) has worked in French and American context. In this research, I solely relied on the in-depth interview I have conducted with the photojournalist, who took the image. It can be extended to editors, newsmakers, gatekeepers and other agents of news-making field. Furthermore, reception analysis can be added via conducting focus groups to see the meaning making processes of the end users. Finally, official reports of governmental organizations and NGOs can be thoroughly analyzed, in terms of their discursive formations and be compared and contrasted with an anthropological field study on the real conditions of the disaster victims.

In this thesis, I lay emphasis on what is made visible and rendered sensible within the aesthetic, visual and discursive regime of Turkey. I have attempted to connect inside and outside the frames, the interaction of the governing and the governed, formation of consensus and disruption of dissensus, and the relation between politics and the police. I argue that visual regime is a field of struggle and has a dynamic nature with its mere noises and consensual realms.

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