LIVING WASTE:

MAKING A LIFE IN WASTED SPACES

YUSUF KUTLU

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

2015

LIVING WASTE:

MAKING A LIFE IN WASTED SPACE

Thesis submitted to the

Institute for Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Sociology

by

Yusuf Kutlu

Boğaziçi University

2015

Living Waste: Making A Life in Wasted Spaces

This thesis has been approved by

Prof. Dr. Nükhet Sirman   _____
(Thesis Advisor)

Assistant Prof. Dr. Ceren Özselçuk   _____

Prof. Dr. Şemsa Özar   _____

March 2015

THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis traces a case of how internally displaced Kurds make a life after being forced to migrate to the cities of western Turkey. The research was conducted with internally displaced Kurdish waste pickers living in the Tarlabaşı district of İstanbul and takes their working processes, their life practices, politics, intellectuality and aesthetics as a significant research framework. Since the aim is the making of a life in the informal space of Tarlabaşı, I examine how they produce space, time, and practices through their labor process, political practices, writings and intellectual, artistic and aesthetic products.

My thesis argument is that the informal space of Tarlabaşı provides opportunities for internally displaced Kurds to make a life outside of modern state grounds, i.e. in a space of *autonomy*. Existing in this autonomous space produces practices of transgressing state power permanently for the purpose of making a life, despite intentionally emerged political aims and agendas that target state power. In so doing, life itself consists of perpetual practices of violating not only state power (by illegally obtaining its amenities), but also capitalist market relationships, modern urban life's established normativity, and notions of regulated time and space in the city. Furthermore, I show how waste pickers apprehend and sense the world, and distinguish the common, structured and hegemonic way of the sensible. It is an attempt to find how internally displaced Kurdish waste pickers escape from the *formal,* the *constituted,* the *normative* and create a new way of living and being in the informal space.

TEZ ÖZETİ

Bu tezin amacı, yerinden edilmiş Kürtlerin, Türkiye'nin batı illerine zorla gönderildikten sonra nasıl bir yaşam kurduklarının bir saha çalışması üzerinden izini sürmektir. Araştıma, ülke içinde yerinden edilmiş ve İstanbul Tarbaşı'nda çöp toplayıcısı olmuş Kürtlerle yapılmıştır ve onların çalışma süreçlerini, yaşam pratiklerini, politikleşme şekillerini, entelektüel ve estetik deneyimlerini temel araştırma konusu olarak belirler. Amaç, informal bir mekan olan Tarlabaşı'nda bir hayatın nasıl oluşturulduğunu anlamaya çalışmak olduğu için mekanı, zamanı, çalışma sürecindeki pratiklerini, politik pratiklerini, yazılarını ve entellektüel ürünlerini ve sanat ve estetik üretimlerini nasıl oluşturduklarına tanıklık ediyorum.

Tezimin iddiası, Tarlabaşı'nın enformal mekanının, modern devlet zemini dışında bir özerklik mekanı haline gelerek, ülke içinde yerinden edilmiş Kürtler için fırsatlar sunduğudur. Kasıtlı olarak ortaya çıkan politik amaçlar ve devlet gücünü hedef alan gündemler olmamasına rağmen, bu tür bir özerklik durumunda bulunmak, aynı zamanda, yaşam alanı oluşturmak için sürekli olarak devlet gücünü aşan pratikler üretilmesini sağlar. Hayatın kendisi sadece (devletin sağladığı kolaylıkları kaçak/kanunsuz olarak elde ederek) devlet gücünü değil, aynı zamanda sermaye piyasası ilişkilerini, modern şehir yaşamının yerleşmiş kurallılığını ve şehrin düzenlenmiş zaman ve mekanını sürekli ihlal eden pratikleri kapsar. Ayrıca, bu tezde, çöp toplayıcılarının dünyayı nasıl kavradığı ve duyumsadığını, ve yaygın, yapılandırılmış, hegemonik türden bir mantıksallığı nasıl ayırt ettiklerini ortaya koymak istiyorum. Bu tez, ülke içinde yerinden edilmiş çöp toplayıcısı Kürtlerin, geçerli, yapılandırılmış ve kurallara uygun (formal, kurulu ve normatif) olandan nasıl kaçtığını anlamak için bir teşebbüstür.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

to waste pickers

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: INFORMAL AND FORMAL

I cannot separate my body from waste;
I cannot separate my written things from waste;
there is no waste outside of me;
I have no self outside of waste.[1]

This is how a Kurdish waste picker, a forced migrant, and a dweller of Tarlabaşı, Istanbul attempts to explain himself and the relationship between himself and waste in the interview I conducted with him. It seems there is no separation between himself and waste; both have a uniform existence. In the process of my research on the waste pickers in the district of Tarlabaşı, this and other interviews of this kind made me realize that what I was really investigating was the emergence of the life of internally displaced Kurds around and in waste. What possibility of life can be materialized in such conditions? Dirt, misery, penury and danger are the first to hit the eye of an observer. But this sense of abjectness is quickly dispelled when one realizes that this life also creates its own *adequateness* and *stability,* within a novel from of existence and being. Therefore, my question is: how can life be shaped in such circumstances of "extremity"? The "plasticity of life" that can be formed in and around waste reminds me of the malleability of life overall. Having been forced to leave their hometowns in Kurdistan (in the southeast of Turkey), relocating to Istanbul and finally doing the work of waste picking in Istanbul is nothing less than a re-designing of life after catastrophe.

---

[1] "Kendi vücudumu çöplerden ayıramıyorum; yazdığım şeyleri çöpten ayıramıyorum; benim dışımda bir çöp yok, çöpün dışında bir ben yok".

The reason why I work on this group of "informal workers" is the particularity of their engagement with work and space, defined as "informal" in the literature. Like the Kurdish waste pickers who destabilize the meaning of writing and of city-space, I try to de-stabilize the term "informal." I point out that making a living is not an easy or peaceful process under conditions where the state apparatus is bent on registering everything and thus controlling every interstice of life. The result is a life of informality, dodging the police, making the street into a home and employing non-visible silent political practices. The streets become a core dimension of waste picking: as a living space, as a space to encounter state authority and also as a space to escape from that authority via permanent practices of dogging, hiding and fleeing by the help of the numerous complex, narrow and winding streets of Tarlabaşı. I thus try to show that working informally by picking waste for a living becomes a way out from the hegemonic, modern regulation of time and space and reconfigures the meaning of informality.

A life in waste also reconfigures objects: "useless", "dirty," "worthless" and "dead" objects of consumption, now waste, come back to life as exhibited decorative objects that signify another kind of life. The bodies of the internally displaced are embellished with found waste objects. Their homes and streets are ornamented with wasted objects that have their own, alternative history. The ways in which internally displaced urbanized Kurdish informal workers live the waste in wasted spaces lead to the emergence of a new form of politics and aesthetics through which they problematize everyday urban normativity, capital market obligations, the regime of citizenship, the hegemonic regime of the visible and sayable, and problematize both knowledge and morality.

While numerous studies that focus on the issue of forced migration and internally displaced Kurds study the difficulties of living in the city, the effects of this migration on the labor market or issues of race and discrimination, very few focus on how these people make a life in the city after forced migration, let alone on how this life can amount to an aesthetic experiment that reconfigures the experience of time and space in the city. Therefore, I was able to ask more questions: How do the internally displaced Kurds escape the hegemonic regime of aesthetics and of materiality of the city? How do they construct a new aesthetics regime in the name of making a life? And, in more general terms, how might a different regime of aesthetics and of intellectuality reconfigure subjects, objects, space and time so that it contests the hegemonic order?

But what is the story? Why do internally displaced Kurds insist on picking waste and staying in the "informal" spaces of Beyoğlu and Tarlabaşı? And how do they produce a total life within this labor process, simultaneously speaking to and reformulating politics, intellectual and artistic life as well as notions of aesthetics? The answer to these questions begins far away in Kurdish provinces, and carries us all the way to the production of value through new recycling technologies. Gradually, garbage became a valuable object for forced-immigrant Kurds when there was nothing else to do for living, and they started to pick it up to sell. But in the mid-2000s, garbage was over-valued economically, and it began to grab the attention of large recycling corporations as well as the urban and municipal governments. Garbage recycling evolved into a giant economic sector and in turn dramatically formalized. However, since the sector is dispersed in a wide range of labor units, there remained unregistered parts. Garbage pickers constitute the most prominent "informal" component of this industry.

The Istanbul Municipality, with the support of recycling industries in the private sector, has been attempting to "formalize" Kurdish garbage pickers in Beyoğlu and Tarlabaşı. They were firstly offered the opportunity to work (to collect garbage) for the recycling sector[2] as wage workers. However, garbage pickers did not accept, and continued to pick garbage "informally" on their own because, for them, garbage is not only an object for marketing, it bears a value different than the "economic" value. The space they live in, the subjectivities they construct, the way they perform politics, and the whole life they aestheticize and intellectualize are intimately related to (picking) of garbage, and the "informality" and the sociality they build around garbage.

In short, in this thesis, the investigation aims to concentrate on the space, called "informality", and on the "practices" which are developed and deployed in that space. In so doing, I aim to shed light on the life processes of the waste pickers, and through an analysis of this life through garbage, expound on the diverse forms of its practices and politics. The aim is to find out what makes informal life desirable for internally displaced Kurds in Tarlabaşı, Istanbul. It is an attempt to find how internally displaced Kurdish waste pickers escape from the *formal,* the *constituted,* the *normative* and create a new way of living and being in that informal space. In this thesis, the concept of the informal will imply the concept autonomy. The thinking of informal space as an autonomous space is the result of significant possibilities of acting autonomously in that space. For an internally displaced Kurd in Tarlabaşı, "informal" space provides abundant possibilities of taking action to live in the city. My focal point is that how that space which is called the "informal" is capable of making desirable life spaces and how the informal space can promise an autonomous

---

[2] There are two dominant recycling sectors in Istanbul; one belongs to Albayraklar Company, and the other belongs to Sabancı Company.

space. Therefore, there are two terms that should be elucidated before I can proceed any further: "formality" and "informality".

Dichotomy of "Informal" and "Formal": A Hegemonic Discourse

My research location, which exists in a real time and space, is legally, economically, socially, and in a "proper" way called an "informal" space. Tarlabaşı is a significant place of informality as well as illegality and crime according to the hegemonic discourse of power. Hegemonic discourses use predetermined and predefined concepts of "informal space" which, according to legalist accounts[3], are spaces defined as "illegal", "extralegal" and "unregistered" and, according to structuralist accounts[4], lack some of the "basic necessities" for life, thus conceptualizing such spaces as "poverty", "exclusion", "marginal". However, these are not the conceptualizations used in this research. The discursive definition of the concepts of informality and formality addresses a specific form of subjectivity, a form of space and form of practices. The operation of this dichotomy is generalized by the first pole – formality. Formality is indeed defined by law and forms of legality which is by definition the act of the power. While the formal side is defined discursively; "large-scale, regulated, registered, numerated, under government protection, 'modern'; the rest remains informal; small-scale activities, largely escaping recognition, enumeration, regulation or government protection"[5].

---

[3] Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

[4] Cathy A. Rakowski, 'The Informal Sector Debate, Part 2: 1984-1993', *Contrapunto: The Informal Sector Debate in Latin America*, Ed. Rakowski, C. (Albany & New York: State University of New York Press, 1994.), pp. 31-50.

[5] Caroline Moser, 'The Informal Sector Debate, Part 1: 1970-1983', *Contrapunto: The Informal Sector Debate in Latin America*, Ed. Rakowski, C. (Albany & New York: State University of New York Press1994), pp. 11-29.

However, the term "informal" is not a consensual term in social and economic literature. In accordance with dichotomist and structuralist approaches, for instance, Hernando de Soto places "informality" in opposition to formality and assumes there are no constitutive relations between formality and informality.[6] On the other hand, some still accept the duality between the informal and formal but claims constitutive relations between both. Ananya Roy maintains that "informality" has constitutive relations with "formality".[7] Whereas according to de Soto, the neoliberal processes deals only with "formal" space, Roy assumes that processes of informality have close relations with process of neoliberalism, which is in fact the consequence of "neoliberalism". Roy claims that neoliberalism does not only work with "formal" space, but also with "informal" space. In other words, whereas for de Soto "formal" space is only the ground for working of neoliberalism, Roy claims that "informal" spaces are also an essential ground for this. Therefore, accordingly, "neo-liberalization" or "capitalization" happens not only in the space of "formalization", but also triggers the process of "informalization".

Hegemonic discourse, regarding the dichotomy of formal and informal, presents informality within a double and opposed designation; firstly, informal space is considered as a space of illegality or extralegality, in account of the legitimacy and of the legislative codifications; and secondly, the subject of the informal is presented in account of the lack: lack of "proper" works and "standard" living conditions, and in relation to this, lack of "proper" way of doing politics, lack of intellectual practices and lack of aesthetic sense of the world. However, if there is still *work* to

---

[6] Hernando de Soto, *The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1989).

[7] Ananya Roy, "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning", *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71(2), 2005, pp. 147-161. Also see Alejandro Portes, Manuel Castells & Lauren A. Benton, (eds.) *The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries* (Baltimore. MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

do and a *life* to live in that "informal" space, how can we recognize it, and how can we explain it? And how can politics, intellectual life and aesthetics be formed if these are not "formal" and "proper" ones?

Here, my aim is not to describe informality with reference to formality, and not to designate both as opposed to each other. Nor do I approach informality and formality as two different poles, whether they are interrelated with each other or not. The concept of informality as a space of life takes place in this thesis neither for the people who live in there are in lack, nor for the space is a place of extra-legal, unregistered or illegal economic production and circulation. My use of the concept of informality for my research study does not constitute a dialogue with the use of the concept in the literature, I also do not criticize the concept, but I employ it because no other concept suits for the space I research. The space in which I conduct research and the life I investigate can be named differently as a result of the debates on informality and formality. My point of departure for this investigation is that the space called "informality", not in the way it is described by governmental discourses or by the economy and sociology literatures, but as a *native* concept of my research for being able to look at how informal space and informal life is constituted by the people designated as informal in Tarlabaşı. The concept of informal, in this thesis, actually does not contain any limitations and presumptions to address a certain group of people. However, the practices, the spaces and the subjects of the group of people I worked with all are described as "informal".

But my aim is to understand how informal space turns into a space of autonomy. The concept of informality in this thesis will always refer to the concept of autonomy for Tarlabaşı, and for the people who are outside of the

formal and modern constituted forms of state. Therefore, I employ the term informality as it provides an autonomous space for the internally displaced Kurdish waste pickers, which leads them to create an autonomous intellectuality, aesthetics, and an autonomous politics. That is to say, the concern with waste pickers is the existence of a mode of economy, a mode of sociality and form of life which result in a "different" form of politics, intellectuality, art and aesthetics.

During my ethnographic research in Beyoğlu and Tarlabaşı, the internally displaced Kurdish waste pickers I came across did not explain themselves in terms of lacking of something, but always in terms of having the ability to do or make something. That is the starting point from which I was able to ask the questions of what they are able to do and how the informal space provided opportunities for them to have/do something for a living. I realized that I had to think out of the "standard" and "modern" living conditions and the "proper, formal and legal" works. Therefore, in a modern city, I started to look at the possibility of a non-modern kind of life, with all the dimensions of its working and living spaces, following the intellectual and aesthetic aspects, the politics and forms of resistance, keeping in mind the inseparability of each aspects and forms. In Rancière's terms, what I look at is an "aesthetic community", in which "a free, autonomous community is a community whose lived experience does not rend itself into separate spheres of activity, of a community where art and life, art and politics, life and politics are not severed one from another".[8]

---

[8] Jacques Rancière, "Aesthetics and Politics: Rethinking the Link", Berkeley, *Conference paper.* (September 2002).

Informality: A Deterritorialized or Autonomous Space

The concept of "informal" however, is required to be rearticulated for the frame of the research more deeply. Certainly, the concept embeds a specific mode of *expression* and a specific mode of *content,* that the link between both which makes the concept presents the subject –an internally displaced Kurdish waste picker – in specific form –illegal, extralegal and unregistered – needs to be reorganized and reconstituted, or *reterritorialized.[9]* The "illegal", the "extralegal" and the "unregistered" are territorialized or signified with a certain form of *expression* that is determined by the signifier. In most of the cases, the expression is articulated with "norms", "morality", "culture", and "modern legislative laws". However, even the expression itself comes up as "extralegal, illegal and unregistered", the *content* is *deterritorialized* pervasively in everyday life by the "informal" waste pickers. That is to say, while the *expression* is discursively constructed by the signifier, or by the powerful, the *content* relates to the acts of the subjects in everyday life. That once more needs to be expressed. If the expression is yet again assumed to be linked to the content in a direct and linear way, it will be again authoritative under the influence of the signifier. But if we assume that the link between content and expression is being determined under the influence of the time and space, and by the deeds of the subject, there will be heterogeneous constructions of the link, which is exactly the concern of this field research which I conduct in a real time and in a real space, and with real subjects.

---

[9] For the conceptions of "territorialization", "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization" see: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press2005).; *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press 2003).

Therefore, even the expression is coded as "illegal, extralegal and unregistered", the content, once again, *reterritorialized* in frame of that real time and real space as "autonomy", "freedom", "resistance" and "escaping". In so doing, the "informal" is decoded or deterritorialized again and again in various areas by the garbage pickers. Life, politics, and the intellectual, linguistic and aesthetic aspects primarily rearticulate the content of the "informal", and legitimize all reasons for being an "informal" and living in the "informal space", even when the expression labels them "illegal, extralegal and unregistered".

Consequently, the deterritorialization of the content, of the informal is the fact of the violation of the expression, of the signifier, of the hegemony of the state in everyday life. After the violation, what is left is the set of possibilities of informal space. Waste pickers apply the potentiality of informal space to establish their peculiar working conditions, set of political behavior, intellectual activities and aesthetic practices, and in turn, all these practices legitimate the life in informal space, even it is "informal", "illegal", "non-proper", "immoral" and so forth.

<center>Informal Possibilities: Risks and Life</center>

> I was lost. All I saw a strange space and strange people. I had no money, no shelter; I didn't even know how to work in the city. I had no skill, no knowledge, no chance... Istanbul was so big I was always scared of being lost. How can you be lost in a place you don't know.[10]

The fact is that, informal space for an internally displaced Kurd, with its all possibilities, actually, is not an opportunity; but rather it is a space of uncertainty at the beginning. The question is how to make these spaces stable enough to make

---

[10] "Kaybolmuştum. Sadece gördüğüm tuhaf bir yer ve tuhaf insanlardı. Hiç param yoktu, kalacak bir yerim yoktu, hatta şehirde nasıl çalışılır onu bile bilmiyordum. Bir zanaatım, bir bilgim, şansım yoktu. İstanbul o kadar büyüktü ki her an kaybolacam diye korkuyordum. Hiç bilmediğin bir yerde kaybolmak artık nasıl oluyorsa".

safe living and working conditions. Until this level of stability is reached, potentialities are unfolded, and in the process you may be lost, and the end result may be one of a destruction and misery.

The question is: how are these *possibilities* encapsulated and made into an informal space livable for the forced-immigrant informal Kurdish workers, and how do these potentialities shape these "abilities"? Put simply, my question is why people want to live in informal space. And why are they against working in "formal" space, as they were offered chances to join the formal economy on several occasions but refused to do so? They continue to pick waste and materials outside of any "formal" structures and institutions as far as possible.

However, it is clear that the discourses that waste pickers employ in everyday life do not actually contain this formal/informal dichotomy. They do not categorize their working as "informal" and what they refuse as "formal". They talk about what they "do" and what they "do not", and do not "want to do". One of my interviewee has tried to explain this in Kurdish pastoral metaphors:

> This is the difference between being tied down and being free; the difference between being a shepherd and being a sheep. I don't want to say that we are shepherd rather than sheep. I know I am still a sheep. In my village, I had many sheep and I was a real shepherd actually. In fact, the sheep are well known for finding their feed. What I was doing was to prevent sheep from getting lost. They were also free when they got lost, but once free, there was also the worst possibility of falling prey to a wolf.[11]

The choice, actually, is not made between a "sheep" and a "shepherd", but between a free and a captured sheep. The risk always remains there for a free sheep. The wolf waits for her somewhere outside. Pure freedom may turn into full

---

[11] "Bu başından bağlı olmak ile özgür olmak arasındaki bir fark, koyun olmak ile çoban olmak arasındaki bir fark. Koyun olmak yerine çobanız demek istemiyorum. Hala koyun olduğumu biliyorum. Kendi köyümde koyunlarım vardı ve gerçekten çobandım. Aslında koyun nerede yem bulacağını çok iyi biliyor. Benim yaptığım onların kaybolmasını engellemekti. Kaybolduklarında da özgür oluyordu, fakat en kötü ihtimal bir kurda yem olmak var kaybolduğunda".

destruction, complete loss and irrevocable misery. This is a side effect, or perhaps a trade-off, of what an informal space holds for subject living in that space. The possibilities of informal space may suddenly erupt and drive the subject into pure annihilation. However, there are also ways of taking advantages form these possibilities.

To sum up, informal space has possibilities but what is remarkable is the way these possibilities enable the residents of the informal space to continue their lifestyle. As insisted above, these potentialities may pave the way to destruction, misery, loss, and "being fall prey of a wolf". On the other hand, within the same potentialities of informality, that space is formed with escape, autonomy and that it is intellectualized, aestheticized, and that this leads to a "dignified" life is also part of this informal space. I attempted to seek how this precarious space with its all side effects and risks turns into a livable space – one that is if not always secure, at least livable with various qualities.

Each context of practices sets forth its leading reason for the waste pickers to live. While they pick up waste on their own, the reason becomes their self-regulated and elasticity of their working conditions. As they explain, "I am my own boss"[12], "I am not anyone's slave"[13], "it is the choice of being a free sheep or a captured sheep, if not yet being a shepherd"[14] and "I *decide* when I should work and when I shouldn't"[15]. The precarious void of informal space, over practices of working every day, is folded with elasticity of work and self–regulation of the time and space.

---

[12] "Ben kendimin patronuyum".

[13] "Kimsenin kölesi değilim".

[14] "Çoban olamasan da; başından bağlı ya da özgür bir koyun olma arasındaki bir karardır".

[15] "Ne zaman çalışıp çalışmayacağımı ben kendim diyorum".

The leading aspect of living in that "informality" is to generate new practices of living about "regulation of time and space". There are neither timetables nor specified spaces qualified for certain practices. The informal space lets them to regulate their time and space. Therefore, the proper time and space is determined by their decisions and initiatives. There are no *outside* determinants beyond them. Having the power to arrange or *not* to arrange their time and space provides enormous autonomy on their work, life and doing other things such as writing or any intellectual activities.

> I would like to work at night, but sometimes in the day, but sometimes never. It is up to me. Sometimes I go to faraway provinces like Beşiktaş and Şişli for picking paper, and sometimes just nearby. You have to separate waste: paper, plastics, metal and so on. We do it at home. I decide the time to rest and write. The journal we publish sometimes requires a serious time and labour. Therefore, I don't want to spend my all time picking waste. If I worked in a regular job I wouldn't have any time to do anything else. But now, sometimes we find interesting materials in the waste; we exhibit them in the conferences which we organize ourselves. And we publish a journal.[16]

Beyond this, self-regulation of time and space, which is the result of the autonomy of the informal space, enables them to have a popular control on the territory, contracts, conflict resolution, credits, marriage and so forth.

Their home and neighborhood as living space become the reason of staying in the "informal" space. Again, as one of them tells "I can use illegal electricity even if the state is aware of that"[17]. And another one says "we are able

---

[16] "Gece çalışmayı seviyorum, fakat bazen gündüz, bazen de çalışmak istemiyorum. Bu bana bağlı. Bazen uzak yerlere, Beşiktaş'a Şişli'ye giderim, bazen de yakın yerlere. Çöpleri ayrıştırmak zorundasın, içinde kağıt, plastik , demir gibi şeyler var. Bunu evin önünde yapıyoruz. Dinlenmek ve yazmak için zamanı ben söylüyorum. Bastığımız dergi bazen çok ciddi zaman ve emek istiyor. Bu yüzden bütün zamanımı çöp toplamakle bitirmek istemiyorum. Düzenli bir işte çalışsaydım, bir şey yapmak için bir zamanım olmayacaktı. Fakat şimdi bazı değerli şeyler buluyoruz çöpte; kendi başımıza yaptığımız konferanslarda bunları sergiliyor. Ve de bir dergi basıyoruz."

[17] "Devlet farkında olsa da kaçak elektrik kullanıyorum".

to hold our wedding ceremonies in the street, and nobody complains about it"[18]. Crucially, home is the conjunction of working and resting in everyday life. Since waste picking requires a multi-processed labour, home is an important space to distinguish and categorize the materials picked from garbage. And only these "informal" housing spaces allow them to do that. In only this kind of housing the potentialities are molded with the comfort to obtain the necessities of everyday life.

Furthermore, the streets of Tarlabaşı become the reason for why they do not want to leave their informal space. "If we are beaten in our streets we won't be able to hang onto Tarlabaşı"[19]. Streets provide enormous ways of escaping, hiding and running from the police, and in the last instance of fighting, of resisting the police after picking garbage was formalized, and they refused to be formalized.

> We collect waste from the streets even far away from home, and run in our streets from the police. And sometime we fight with them in our streets when we feel strong.[20]

The streets are a space of resistance, as it is also the space of escaping from the mainstream currents of power, and as an alternative space for activities of life. As such, they are the intersection of several conjunctures. The possibilities of the streets of Tarlabaşı are heterogeneous, but crucially the streets' narrow and curved nature provides the waste pickers ways to escape and hide. Therefore, the reasons of living and working in this "informal" space are numerous, and all seem to be connected to ideas of liberty and making an autonomous life.

---

[18] "Kendi düğünlerimizi sıkakta yapıyoruz ve kimse buna karışmıyor"

[19] "Kendi sokaklarımızda yenilirsek, Tarlabaşı'nda artık tutunamayız".

[20] "Çöpleri uzak sokaklardan toplarız, kendi sokaklarımızda da polisten kaçarız. Bazen de onlarla bu sokaklarda kavga ederiz, çünkü burda kendimizi güçlü görüyoruz".

Method and Ethnography

My research method was designed as an ethnographic research. I worked with people who have a specific location for living and working in Beyoğlu and the nearby areas. In part, Tarlabaşı was the center of my research even though picking waste disperses waste pickers to different places of Istanbul. Tarlabaşı is a neighborhood of Istanbul's Beyoğlu district, infamous as a place of poverty, crime, drugs and so forth. The structure of the neighborhood consists of historical yet currently depilated buildings, complex and narrow corridors. By contrast, the surrounding areas of the district are generally wealthy and include many shopping centers and places of entertainment.

I have kinship relations with some of the waste pickers, and I am a co-regioner (hemşeri) with most of them. They were forced to migrate mainly from Şırnak and Siirt, the latter of which is my hometown, to Istanbul. However, my family and I do not have forced migration experiences. Although some of the waste pickers featured in this research do not know personally anything about me, they do know my family very well. In the beginning of my ethnographic study I had major difficulties in joining their daily practices, family space and working activities. I then asked my family to help me and to tell them that I am not a "stranger" and that I was just trying to write an "innocent" research paper for my university course. This is when doors started to open for me. At the beginning, all of them knew me as a "conformist" university student, a "lucky" Kurd, looking for "adventures" and interested in "nonsensical" investigations. I never had enough justifications to defend myself. At the end, I have no idea if my father's words changed their perceptions about me, yet I felt their intimate friendship in the field.

To engage with their working experience, I bought a garbage cart (which they call *Ferrari*, which is moved solely by pulling by the physical efforts of a human body) in order to collect and carry the waste on the streets. With this waste-cart, a waste picker makes a 20 km journey and collects on average around 100-150 kilos waste in a day. From this they earn about 50-70 liras.

Working with them by trying to understand their job and how they do it constituted a significant part of my participant observation. They generally look for garbage alone on the streets and sometimes as groups of three or four people. Most of my attempts of picking garbage occurred together with one picker or a group. But sometimes I also collected garbage alone. Another participant observation attempt that I made was attending to their organized actions. These actions mostly happened after the attempts of forcibly placing these waste pickers into the formal sector: by making them wage-earner workers formally employed in the industrial recycling sector. Since they resist this placement process, they came across some difficulties in their working and living space. The Municipality of Istanbul and police forces set up new regulations and interventions that sometimes make it impossible to collect garbage on the streets freely. I bore witness how "informalization" is somehow "illegalized" in the case of collecting garbage.

The in-depth interviews that I conducted with garbage pickers constitute an important part of my research. These were generally held in their homes. Since their home and the place where they accumulate garbage are the same, they spent a lot of time to sorting, packaging, and composting/disassembling garbage in this space. This was also the place where they would tell about the working day of picking garbage and their working experiences. I had also non-structured

interviews with them in that place and in that time. At that moment, packaging and decomposing were jobs generally done by women, who never pick up garbage on the streets. This offered me an opportunity to interact with women in their working and life spaces.

Another important field for my research is the relationship of the waste-pickers with intellectuality and art. The fact is that, after I engaged in their aesthetics and intellectual practices, I was better able to understand their lives. This is because both aesthetics and intellectuality as practices and as products trace the features of life they live in. In the intellectual area they produce monthly journals. The writers of the journals include garbage pickers who have never written before, and the papers they use for publication of the journal are what they collect from garbage. The topics and issues the writings cover are diverse, and range from literature to poetry to articles about garbage collecting, Kurdishness, or even sports events.

Photograph exhibitions are also an important artistic activity of the waste pickers. Photos taken by garbage pickers were always shown without color; all grey; white and black. In these exhibitions, garbage was used as a decorative material. It is strewed around the place where photos are shown on the wall. Garbage becomes an aesthetic and sublime object as elevating its value that will help me to comprehend their deep relationship with it. In this research, garbage as an object takes an important place. The way they objectivize and subjectivize garbage expresses something about their engagement with informality and about why they do not want to leave their chosen informal space of working and living.

Chapter Outline

The thesis research spans actually two time periods. The first period is the period of living in informality without any regular interference from outside, that is, the police, the city municipality and other power centers. The second period marks the interference from outside, and the way waste politics transformed. The second and the third chapters deal with these periods. However, the thesis body consists of four chapters. The fourth chapter, which deals with "writing and intellectuality" and the fifth chapter, on "aesthetics and art", return to field of the research again, to discover the implicit sides of informal space. These implicit sides, in fact, are the most important parts of the thesis, since with aesthetics and writing practices I will present how they constitute life.

In the second chapter, I aim to explain how an informal space, Tarlabaşı, leads internally displaced Kurds to develop a way of life marked by practices of quiet encroachment. The autonomous character of informal space allows waste pickers to provide practices of making a life outside of hegemonic political and economic relations. These practices always cross over the premises with which the hegemonic organizes life and work, and its strategies of conduct, while waste pickers do not have a political agenda and consciousness with the purpose of violating power. I will also explain how this process of "quiet encroachment" differs from other urban movements like "survival strategies", "everyday resistance" and "passive revolution".

In the third chapter, I will present the end of the confort provided by practices of quiet encroachment in Tarlabaşı. The process of losing what waste pickers had gained via practices of quiet encroachment started when waste

became a valuable object for industry, and when Tarlabaşı became a center for the projects of urban transformations. The initial response of the waste pickers to these processes appeared to be confrontational; later the tactics they employed turned into an "escape" or "retreat" from those who attempted to capture them. The aim became to reduce encounters with the government, police, and any other regulatory force as much as possible, out of the fear of being captured.

In the fourth chapter, I trace the ways waste pickers create life with their intellectual activities. My aim is to find the effect of the inputs of intellectual production on producing life. My tools are their writing pieces, with which they do a lot in their life. I will try to demonstrate the form of intellectuality raising from theses writings that transforms the space and makes it livable for them. The theoretical debate of this chapter encapsulates *intellectuality*, *mental* and *manual* labor, *hidden* and *apparent* and *working time* and *leisure time*.

The fifth chapter of the thesis concentrates on artwork and aesthetics in the space of waste. Therefore, I will consider how they use garbage as an object beyond picking and marketing, and how they feel about it in their everyday lives, to understand how they dignify it. To do this, I will look at the life they produce through photographs, waste objects in private collections, and waste objects used in living spaces for decorative purposes. Waste objects in artwork create new forms of relations between the waste pickers and the objects they collect, as well as with space and time.

CHAPTER II

WASTE PICKERS AND PRACTICES OF QUIET ENCROACHMENT

Introduction

In this chapter I will present how an informal space enables waste pickers to develop practices for making a life. The promise of informal space – a space of autonomy which also contests the authority of the modern state – can be pertinent and sustainable to operate. The autonomous space of "informality" is "relatively" outside of the hegemony of the state, and at the same time, is outside of the "legitimacy" of the state. The "legitimacy" of the state is violated silently, and is replaced by the Kurdish waste pickers' own legitimacy. Here I use Asef Bayat's concept of "quiet encroachment", which he conceptualizes to examine culturally, socially and economically "marginalized" groups such as "poor", "informal workers" and "immigrants" in Middle-Eastern societies.[21] While there is a constitutive relationship between the practices of "quite encroachment" and an "autonomous space" of informality, it has also disruptive consequences on the practices of state power, but tacitly and unintentionally.

Quiet Encroachment

"Quiet encroachment" describes this way of life as "a silent, patient, protracted and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in

---

[21] Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor Peoples Movements in Iran,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997);   *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East,* (California: Stanford University Press, 2010); "Globalization and the Politics of Informals in the Global South", *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia,* eds. Ananya Roy and Nezar Alsayyad, (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto and Oxford: Lexington Books 2004).

an effort to survive hardships and better their lives".[22] Practices of quite

encroachment are functional where the state power is "weak" or, where there is a

"state of exception". Even when the power is robust and seems to interfere

everywhere, there are always ways around strict rules and laws, and of the forms

of the state authority in everyday life, especially in informal space. According to

Bayat, these people

> …succeed in doing so largely because the states under which they operate
> are the "soft-states," in that despite their often authoritarian disposition
> and political omnipresence, they lack the necessary capacity, the
> hegemony and technological efficacy, to impose full control over society.
> So, there remain many escapes, spaces, and uncontrolled holes that the
> innovative subaltern can utilize to their advantage.[23]

However, state power does not always operate in a direct and specific way. There

remains always the possibility of closing holes and doors of escaping. The state,

however, lets people in informal space pass by unchallenged, even when it

possesses an ability to intervene. At the same time, there are always thresholds to

set limits for the practices of quiet encroachment of waste pickers. And,

thresholds are determined in the sphere of capitalist industrial economy for

recycling waste and reconstruction of urban space in anticipating of modern city

structure. Before 2007, picking garbage, informal living spaces and practices such

as using of illegal electricity and tap water, were not in the interest of the power

while they were still labeled "illegal" and considered as a "state of exception".

After 2007, however, it became a key issue for the government of the

municipality. An extensive war was waged against waste pickers in Tarlabaşı and

Beyoğlu. However, since this informal life does not consist merely of "survival

---

[22] Asef Bayat, "Un–civil Society: The Politics of the 'Informal People', *Third World Quarterly* 18 No. 1 (1997) 57.

[23] Asef Bayat, "Politics in the City-Inside-out", *City & Society* 24, No. 2, (2012): 24-25.

strategies" but is rather a lifestyle and way of life itself, there always remain new routes of escape. For example, when some of the waste pickers' water was cut off, they used a long hose to obtain water from the households who still had it. When they found no obtainable water nearby (which shows that sometimes water was cut off in large neighborhood) they tried to dig a well to get water, as they had generally done in their hometowns of Şırnak, Batman and Hakkari. Similar methods were also used to obtain electricity, such as the long cables that dispersed around Tarlabaşı. The point of showing these examples is to demonstrate that the waste pickers are always able to find new ways and new practices of encroachment to continue the life they established in Tarlabaşı and Beyoğlu.

Therefore, firstly, in the mode of quiet encroachment, the practices of the waste pickers are neither an intentional action targeting authorities nor a defensive action to protect any gained position in informal space. It is not a politics of "demands" that addresses neither state authorities nor a way of challenging state power – it is not even the aim of it. The waste pickers in Tarlabaşı generally do not demand anything from the state. The significant point is that their direct activities are ahead of their issues in everyday life that go beyond any complaints and demands. Their needs are met by their own work in everyday life. The enormous opportunities of that "informal space" or "autonomous space" enable them to move ahead rapidly and take action. Therefore, for them, everyday life in this instance is neither a perpetual battle against the state power nor a revolution against the capitalist market – but it still disrupts both silently.

Life in Tarlabaşı is not a replica of their previous life in the village. The current practices of encroachment are not a way to sustain their "traditional" life which they had in their villages. In addition, forced immigrants' life also contests this "modern" way of life – that is, the way of life found in modern urban settlements. The fact that "benefiting from its advantages (commodities, infrastructures, services) while rejecting its structures of control and domination (taxes, utility bills, regulation)"[24] designates a space of *in-between.* Precisely, this space as shelter and as a space of making life is constituted neither in a "modern" from nor by a "traditional" basis. Basic needs for a dignified living determine where they place themselves actually. Therefore, when modern institutions and services meet their needs, they take advantage of the services offered, but at the same time do not follow any "proper" way to attach themselves to the aforementioned institutions. To put it another way, they do not feel any responsibility to the modern institutions and obligations but try to receive advantages and benefits from them where possible. Henri Lefebvre thinks of the same situation for ordinary people in everyday life. According to him, the space of the ordinary people is the space of occupation placed between "modern" and "traditional". If the practices of these people are neither traditional nor modern, Lefebvre names them as "the vernacular, the generic, the popular".[25] They carry a liberating ideology. According to Bayat, "a deep desire to live an informal life, to run their own affairs without involving the authorities or other formal institutions" allows them the possibility of "governing their time, obligations and

---

[24] Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran*, 11.

[25] Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (London: Continuum, 2002) 25.

commitments".[26] They also are "reluctant to undertake the discipline imposed for instance in paying taxes and bills".[27]

The practices of quiet encroachment are various and consist of multiplicities that pave the way for a dignified life in urban areas for the waste pickers. The common point of all these practices is that they are "informal" and that they aim at a better life. A "better life" consists of different components which include labor, politics, intellectuality, art and aesthetics. A better life is a whole life despite generating strategies for their daily needs, as the survivalist approaches point out. Therefore, firstly all these dimensions – labor, politics, intellectual, art and aesthetics – are not separated from each other but are part of a whole-life process. The spectrum of life seems unified in a holistic scene. Labor does not separate politics and politics does not separate intellectuality and aesthetics.

Making Life and Survival Strategy

Quiet encroachment is also different from "survival strategy" of the poor, immigrant, subaltern and so forth. Initially, survival strategy concentrates on the short moments of a long-standing life and is taken into consideration in the daily context.[28] The assumption is that there are peaks and thresholds for any difficult situation to provide "basic needs" and maintaining their life, can be surpassed by survival strategies. For survival strategy, meeting the "necessity" is the most important task. The person who needs to survive follows some certain "standard" and "universal" necessities. On the other hand, despite observing that people

---

[26] Asef Bayat, "Un–civil Society: The Politics of the 'Informal People', 59.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Bayat, "Un–civil Society: The Politics of the 'Informal People', 56.

pursue some stated necessities, I chose to study the way they create life. I believe, for the long term, survival strategy cannot explain the whole aspects of life and the approach imagines the poor as victims.[29] On the other hand, the concept of quiet encroachment takes life as a long-term process rather than conjectural moments while the concept of survival strategy reduces whole life on these moments and on these predefined necessities.

Moreover, crucially in both survivals strategy and quiet encroachment there is one subject that gains and another subject that loses. However, while in survival strategy, the cost of gains can be exposed to another one who also looks for survival strategies – a poor – in account of quiet encroachment, the cost of losing it in the authorities. According to Asef Bayat "gains of the agents are not at the cost of their fellow poor or themselves, but of the state, the rich and the powerful".[30] Therefore, based on politics, quiet encroachment has certain consequences than survival strategy has if politics is defined as circumstances between power and subject.[31]

<center>Quiet Encroachment and Passive Revolution</center>

The fact that practices of the forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers encounter most of the time are directly with the "legitimacy", and indirectly confront the hegemony, or the authority. For the reciprocal relation between hegemony and legitimacy, the violation of one is at the same time the violation of the other. The *politics* of internally displaced Kurds appears through this double violation while

---

[29] Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the third World*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[30] Asef Bayat, "Cairo's Poor Dilemmas of Survival and Solidarity", *Middle East Report,* (Winter 1997) 5.

[31] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power", *Critical Inquiry* 8 No. 4 (Summer 1982) 777–795.

there is no intentioned and purposed action against power, but silently, implicitly and gradually attack on urban order.

For Gramsci, the presence of legitimacy is determined by hegemony, and hegemony is the consequence of coherence of "coercion" and "consent", the absence of one component creates always an "organic crisis" of power, of hegemony.[32] Organic crisis comes to the surface throughout the "passive revolution", that is, not submitting "consent" and acting against hegemony while not confronting the authorities directly. However, accordingly, while the practices act indirectly, the aim is still to shatter the power. Therefore, the practices of "passive revolution" actually contain a set of revolutionary intentions and programed political actions targets the current hegemony of the power over nonviolent actions. In that account, the passive revolts keep always the path to replace or reverse the hegemony with employing set of nonviolent practices as struggling against the power, and implicitly and explicitly comprise the aspiration of the restoration of hegemony.

On the other hand, to struggle against the power has no concern for the quiet encroacher, nor is there the intention to fight against it. The similarity between a passive revolution and quiet encroachment comes from the appearance of practices and sometimes the result of the practices. Both are able to disrupt the power whereas with passive revolution it happens consciously or intentionally, but with quiet encroachment it happens unconsciously and unintentionally. However, for the practices of the quiet encroachment the aim is different, that is, to *live* by its own. If the power sets obstacles on the way of reaching this aim, in order to live, it is again violated to reach that aim.

---

[32] Antonio Gramsci. *Prison Notebooks,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

Saying "imagined" and "invisible" is not to say that something does not exist, or not that it is less inefficient than a "real" and "visible" one. It is a certain qualification related to solidarity and networks. Here I employ one concept from Asef Bayat: "imagined solidarity"[33]. Instead of his "passive networks"[34] I will employ "invisible networks", and one concept from J.K. Gibson-Graham: the "politics of spatiality"[35]. The politics of space designates that in a specific space and time, if everybody does the same thing even without mobilizing networks and collective organizations, they can change the structural character of that space.[36] It does not occur as a kind of concrete solidarity and within integrated relations, but eclectically, each practice turns into a transformative force since each one is practiced for the same purpose and in the same space. If the purpose, which in this case is having a life in Tarlabaşı, is the same, the character of the practices is analogous, too.

However, instead of "passive networks", I will use "invisible networks" since this term will better define the practices of settlers in Tarlabaşı, given that there are always thresholds that turn "invisibility" into "visibility", the "imagined" into the "real". The term "passivity" does not explain their practices, since they are extremely "active" to facilitate life with their labor, intellectual activities, their artistic and aesthetic works. But the curious thing is that this "activeness" never reaches the frontiers of a "revolutionary action" against the

---

[33] Asef Bayat, "Islamism and Social Movement Theory", *Third World Quarterly* 26, No. 6 (2005): 901.

[34] Asef Bayat, "Politics in the City-Inside-Out", 120

[35] J.K. Gibson-Graham, "The Violence of Development: Two Political Imaginaries", *Development* 47, No. 1, (2004): 27-34.

[36] Ibid.

state authority. In fact, the encounters between the state and internally displaced Kurds become visible; they become contentious only with the intervention of state power. The practices of the waste pickers are aimed at avoiding these interventions, because they almost invariably result in the loss of some of the gains the waste pickers previously had.

In fact, whatever internally displaced Kurds gained in Tarlabaşı is the result of their "imagined" and "invisible" solidarity and networks. One says:

> We have gained a life here peacefully, but when we start to fight, we are start to lose. The best is always to run away from the police. We are too weak when we confront with them. What can you (one) do if you are weak; you run, you hide… but the fight sometimes is inevitable.[37]

The gains, to be sure, were peacefully achieved, but not "properly", "formally" and "legally". There are always risks to keeping such gains safe, yet steps are taken to protect gains. Therefore, the movement turns into concrete solidarity aim to protect gains. Visible networks and collective organizations arise which lead to mediation of contentious confrontation with power. The results are the emergence of a clear ideology which is leftist, the crystallization of Kurdish political identity, the insistence of clear leadership with certain programs and time-tables for actions or movements. However, all these determinations do not occur by the choices of the waste pickers; the reason was only thresholds that came from the outside. The new urbanized capital economy, policies of urban transformation, new capitalized valuable objects such garbage, new attempts to discover new occupiable spaces in urban frontiers like Tarlabaşı result in authorities' interventions to the waste pickers' life and work.

---

[37] "Burada huzurlu bir şekilde bir hayat kazandık, kavga etmeye başladığımızda kaybetmeye başlıyoruz. En iyisi polisten hep kaçmak. Onlarla karşılaştığımızda çok zayıf kalıyoruz. Çok zayıfsan ne yapalirsin ki; kaçarsın, saklanırsın… fakat bazen kavga mecburi oluyor."

Putting aside this discussion to the second chapter, attempts to go further to account of "imagined solidarity" and "invisible networks" is crucial to understand the horizontal character of the informal space. Since there is no clear ideology to be affiliated with, no collective organizations to be part of, no clear leadership to follow, no plan or program to execute, the space provides a complex set of links that connects each with another in enormous combinations. Each person seems to act in an atomized and independent manner, but by making and living their own individual lives, the end result of each atomized person turns into a collective total life. Therefore, the networks between each internally displaced Kurd with another one, if not chaotic, are in a manner of complexity and multiplicity. This complexity and multiplicity makes the informal space remarkably smooth and supple, which gives its actors enormous ability to act in such a space. However, the "imagined solidarity" and "invisible networks" are never declared. Their existence is beyond declarations. "We are all Kurds", "we are all the internally displaced" or "we are all waste pickers" living in Tarlabaşı is an internal and factual reality, needs no declaration, and makes everything "invisible" and "imagined".

Everyday Encroachment and Everyday Resistance

Not even the practices of forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers follow the concept of "resistance" of James C. Scott, in *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. Scott distinguishes two forms of resistance as "real resistance" as one which is organized, planned and systematic with revolutionary purpose, and the second one as "token resistance", which is non-systematic and

unorganized, non-revolutionary and without clear leadership.[38] However, having insisted that "token resistance" also embeds *intentionality,* which makes it real as "real resistance", Scott attributes a certain rationality to the action, and to the practices of the ordinary in everyday life. The practices of waste pickers do not necessarily include this sort of *intentionality* and *rationality* until they encounter municipal or state forces' intervention in their everyday working and living conditions. The "weapons" they have are just "tools" or "practices" to live, but not to fight against the power.

For Scott, "the weapons" may be insignificant, trivial, minor and privatized but for him it is because intentionally to transgress that he names the practices as "weapons".[39] He also insists that the weapons such as practices embedded intentionality to aim of violating state power, power of lords or of landowners. He emphasizes weapons as practices of battle with the power. However, in my experience of waste pickers, until they face a force from *outside* which makes their living and working space insecure, the only intentionality is the intentionality to secure the life they have built in Tarlabaşı. Making a life and securing that life are two different stages that need to be employed two sets of different practices. In the first stages, life was built by practices of quiet encroachment; intentional resistance appears in the second stage, for securing the life they built. The everyday resistance approach always ignores these two stages.

The relationship of the waste pickers with the outside is beyond an opposition to power. The relation with the outside is more complex. However, resistance-centered approaches draw a direct relation between power and

---

[38] James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 292.

[39] *Ibid.*

subordinated groups, and eliminates this complexity and multiplicity of the reasons in their relations with outside. Despite that, this relationship with the outside is obviously neither a passive relation nor a relation of subordination, but and extremely dynamic, aggressive, and heterogeneous one that challenges all morality of public space, capital economy and modern state prerogatives.

Beside this, under the influence of Foucauldian notion of power and its *decentered* character, it is assumed that the relation between power and subject should be evaluated beyond "binary oppositions". On the other hand, by taking into consideration that power penetrates everyday life with various technologies of life in uncertain and everlasting ways[40]; "everyday resistance" is located in an oppositional place against "everyday of power" and its effects, namely domination and submission.[41] However, a quiet encroacher, an internally displaced Kurd, does not need to be dominated and subordinated in order to be involved in practices of encroachment.

Conclusion

Informal space is a space of life that is constituted through some certain practices by waste pickers. These practices always carry a tension against the state authority and power. It seems that power hardly recognizes the practices of quiet encroachment for a moment. Then, these are recognized by power, yet up to a certain level the ruling power is not interested in these contested practices against its rule, not because it is weak or a soft-state. The reason may be that, without any state these people overcome to live. It becomes economical and unproblematic

---

[40] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol 1* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

[41] Scott, *Weapons of the Weak.*

for the state to intervene, even as people transgress some laws, rules, premises of modern life, and so forth. However, this status quo is not permanent; sometimes power finds enough justifications to intervene in the transgressive lives of these waste pickers.

Until the intervention of power, waste pickers make a life through practices of quiet encroachment within the waste in the informal space of Tarlabaşı. Informal space enables the waste pickers to challenge hegemony, create a life and secure that life through their practices of quiet encroachment outside of the formal and is outside of power. In fact, it is a space of autonomy, and what waste pickers do in that space, is to have an autonomous life.

CHAPTER III

ENTER POWER: FIGHT OR FLIGHT

So, what was the attractiveness of this job?
Earning a lot of money?
Let us clarify it:
First of all, it is your own job.
There is no boss/superior.
It does not matter whether you are an old offender or not.
It does not matter whether you sell off or not.
You do not even need any capital.[42]

Introduction

In this chapter, I will trace the actions two different moments of Kurdish waste

pickers after collecting waste was made illegal for them. The first event that emerged

to challenge this regularization process consists of practices of what seemed like

"resistance" against all the procedures which prevented them from collecting waste.

The second moment indeed emerged out of the unsuccessful and fruitless efforts of

the first moment of "fight". It is a new moment of "flight". Since, I do not attempt to

put the practices of *fighting-against* and *running-away* into the sphere of conceptual

resistance, I take the concept of "tactic" as distinct from "strategy".[43]

---

[42] Peki bu işin cazibesi neydi?
Çok mu para kazanılıyordu?
Biraz açalım:
Bir kere kendi işin oluyor.
Amirin yok.
Sabıkalıymışsın kime ne.
Satamadım çürüdü olmaz,
Sermayeye hiç gerekyok". *Katık*, No. 9, p. 6. (*Katik* is a monthly journal is produced by waste pickers).

[43] Michel de Certeau distinguishes "tactic" from "strategy". While tactic is a practice of a subject of resistance, of nomad, homeless, placeless, or of a stranger; strategy is a practice of the subject of power, of rational, scientific, or of "already resident". According to de Certeau, "a strategy… the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city a scientific institution) can be isolated from an "environment"… Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model… A "tactic"… on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on borderline distinguishing the other as visible totality. The place of a

From the "quiet encroachment" to the "fight", and to the "flight", all tactical practices of waste pickers cannot be taken in the same way. The change in tactical practices is neither a result of an evolutionary process nor of a revolutionary rupture. But the relations and the changes between practices employ a mutational dimension, which is to say that each practice is not completely separated from the previous one. Each practice contains a characteristic of the previous one, or sometimes two mutated practices can be employed during the same period.

Therefore, tactics neither remain as homogenous processes nor do they consist of homogenous practices. The basic criterion of alteration of tactical practices is the way in which they achieve the aim to deal the hindrances: the police, the law, the market principle etc. and how they are made sustainable and repetitive. While the alteration of the practices of forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers is responsive to current obstacles to making a living, the outcomes always result in the annihilation of legality, of the law and of the market, and it aims to secure or reclaim the space and the conditions they had formerly gained. Shortly, it is the claim of discursive, symbolic, practical, intellectual and an aesthetically autonomous/free space.

The autonomous space built during the practices of "quiet encroachment" was realized by the forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers as an "autonomous space", only after the non-existent waste was stated as "private property" of non-existed one.[44] And for the space they had built in Tarlabaşı, it was about to lose to the police and the city government's harassments. At this juncture, the practices without a claim, or non-claimed practices of quiet encroachment, turned into claimed-based

---

tactic belongs to the other". Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1984), xix.

[44] That means, with a regulation of urban government of Istanbul, all current waste and future anticipated waste (non-existed yet) was stated as "private property" of an unknown one (non-existed one).

intentional practices towards power. But still, the main motivation of the practices

that violate the law, legality and power structures was to do away with all factors that

could have caused them to lose that autonomous space of quiet encroachment.

Fight: Demanding What Has Been Gained

Waste is collected on the street, in front of shops, restaurants and so forth; but mostly

from the waste containers where people put their garbage. Waste pickers are not the

only ones who collect garbage from the waste containers; there are also municipality

waste workers and recycling techs that collect waste. Mehmet, a waste picker, writes

in his diaries:

> We are trying to be the first to get recycling paper, plastic pets, nylon, or anything beautiful and thought to be valuable, marketable and useable. After us, recycling techs come to collect recyclable waste. The municipal workers are the last collectors; collect everything so that nothing remains there. We should be the first come to collect waste, at least before the other workers.[45]

The usual places of collecting waste by waste pickers were known by everybody

those who live and work among these places. The municipal workers, private

recycling corporations' workers and police were aware of waste pickers who usually

come to collect waste form the waste containers placed along the street. Hamit tells

me his memory about the usual place of collecting waste and how he was surprised

with an innovation to it.

> Before sunrise, just during the reciting of the azan, I got out of the house, took my *Ferrari* (waste collecting car), and was waiting for the other pickers to go collecting waste. When we reach the usual place, the usual street, there was something that was not usual: written on the waste container was "*recycling waste container*" (geri dönüşümlü çöp kutusu). There are no doors to open and pull out waste from the new containers. There are only small

---

[45] "Tekrar kullanılan kağıtları, plastic petleri, naylon ya da güzel olan, para tutan, satılan birşeyi bulmaya gidecek ilk biz olmak istiyorduk. Sonra geridönüşüm işçileri gelip tekrar kullanılacak şeyleri topluyordu.Belediye işçileri en son gelip her şeyi toplayıp, hiçbir şey orda kalmıyordu. Biz ilk once giden olmalıyız, en azından diğer işçiler gelmeden once."

openings on it that only allows putting in waste, but never letting someone to pull out anything from it.[46]

The new-designed waste containers, *recycling waste containers,* have three openings: one for metals, one for plastic, and one for glass. The openings were only to put objects into it. It does not allow pulling out anything from inside. There is a huge opening at the back of the container for pouring it out, but it is locked and the keys are held only by official workers. Waste pickers are not allowed to have keys to open waste containers and pull out waste.

The fact is that, the streets where the *recycling waste containers* were placed were very productive for waste pickers. They were used to obtain a considerable quantity of marketable waste from those streets before the *recycling waste containers* were placed there. After that, waste pickers not only lost an important source of waste, but were also excluded from a certain space in the city, from the streets with the new *recycling waste containers*. Since they could not collect waste from that street, they gave up going to those places to collect waste.

After the 2010s, the *recycling waste containers* are not the only governmental practice against waste pickers. Waste was defined as the property of an unknown owner. This form of property resembles the process of water privatization in Bolivia in 1999. The leading discourse of the privatization of water under the rubric of "even the rain" designates that water from the upcoming rains also was part of the privatization. After 2010, waste in Istanbul suffered the same fate as water in Bolivia. With the privatization of both existing waste and the anticipated future

---

[46]"Daha güneş doğmada, hemen ezanın okunmasıyla evden çıkıyordum, *Ferrarimi* alıp, diğer toplayıcıları bekliyordum toplamaya çıkmak için. Her zamanki yere, her zamanki caddeye çıktığımızda, her zaman orda olmayan bir şey vardı: üstünde *geridönüşüm çöp kutusu* yazan çöpkutuları. Üstünde, açıp içinde çöp çıkartacak hiçbir kapağı yoktu. Sadece içine çöp atılmasına yarayan küçük girişler var, fakat içinden çöp çıkrartmayı bırakmıyor."

quantity of waste, Kurdish waste pickers did not have rights to collect waste. In case of collecting waste by anyone except official workers of the municipality and the companies, taking waste would be penalized as stealing one's property. When waste pickers experienced the practical price of collecting privatized waste such as penalizing fines, being judged by courts as thieves, the confiscation of their *Ferrari* (waste collecting carts) by the police, the political practices and form of existence of Kurdish waste pickers transformed. Abdullah insistently says:

"Appropriating my *Ferrari* was the final straw. Something bad awaits the recycling waste containers."[47]

The New "Luddites": Breaking Recycling Waste Containers

I don't know how much I hate a waste container. It is just a container, a thing. But it is like my enemy that blocks me from earning my keep. I don't know who has put it there. I don't hate the one who has done this. I just hate the container. It has three eyes (openings). It seems like laughing at me with its three eyes when I look at it.[48]

Abdullah in his diary tells about the recycling waste containers that were placed on the streets. For Abdullah, they are like a living being that can laugh and annoy him. It doesn't matter to him who installed these containers. He does not even think about who put them there. The only feeling Abdullah has is hatred for the container, a thing, an object.

The campaign against the recycling waste containers started with little actions:

When I pass the containers I started to kick it softly every time. Then I spat at it. Then I put glass into the plastic compartment, metal in to the glass

---

[47] "*Ferrarime* el koymaları son damla oldu. Geri dönüşüm konteynırlarını kötü bişiler bekliyor".

[48] "Bir çop konteynırına ne kadar fazla pis olduğumu bilmiyorum. Sadece bir konteynır, bir şeydir sadece. Ama sanki ekmek kazanmamı bırakmayan bir düşman gibi. Ona oraya kim koydu bilmiyorum. Onu oraya koyana sinir olmuyorum. Sadece konteynırdan sinir oluyorum. Üç tane gözü var. Ona bakınca sanki bana bakıp bakıp gölüyor".

compartment. I was waiting for the container to get spoiled, and die in the end. But it took so long, and I had to go far away to get waste.[49]

Taking the waste container as a "living-being" offers hope for Abdullah that he can get rid of it and start collecting waste on the streets again. However, those little actions did not work, the containers were still there. Defining collecting waste as illegal did not stop waste pickers, however, as such waste recycling containers collecting waste turned into something outside of their capabilities in certain places. Beyond the obstacles because of recycling waste containers, when they were caught by the police and taken into custody, their waste collecting cars were appropriated, and they were fined.

Mehmet explains the situation about recycling waste containers and how the containers do not actually work for the aim of recycling:

> Keys were held only by drivers of the municipality garbage trucks. I once saw how they opened and emptied the containers. The strange thing is that, on the containers it is written as *recycling* containers. And each container has three openings, each for a specific thing, for instance, for metal, for plastic and so on. People who produce waste obey the openings on the containers. They put plastic into plastic compartment, glass into the glass compartment. However, when a dustbin lorry comes to empty the recycling containers they put all separated waste in the same place. The containers do not work to separate waste for recycling, but it keeps us out of the street.[50]

After recycling waste containers weren placed on the streets by the urban municipality, waste pickers did not put in an appearance in that area. The most efficient area in Tarlabaşı, for collecting waste, turned suddenly into an unfruitful

---

[49] "Çöp konteynırın yanından her geçerken yavaş yavaş tekmelemeye başladım. Sonra ona tükürdüm. Sonra plastik kısmına cam koydum, demirleri de cam kısmına koydum. Sonunda bozulup ölmesini bekliyordum. Fakat o kadar uzun sürdü ki, çöp toplamak için çok uzak yerlere gidiyordum".

[50] "Anağtarları belediye çöp komyonlarının söförleri taşıyorlardı. Konteynırı nasıl açıp boşattıklarını bir keresinde gördüm. Garibime giden şuydu; konteynırın üstünde "geri dönüşüm" yazıyordu. Ve, her konteynırın üç kapağı var, her bir kapağı bir şey koyuyorsun, mesela demir için, plastik için ve böyle. Çöp koyan insanlar bunun gibi yapıyor. Plastiği, plastik kısmına; camı, cam kısmına koyuyorlar. Ama çöp kamyonu gelip boşalttığında konteynırı, farklı yere koyulmuş çöpleri (ayrışmış çöpleri) hep aynı yere koyup karıştırıyor. Bu konteynırlar çöpü ayırıp geri dönüştürmek için kullanılmıyor. Fakat bizi oraya sokmamaya yarıyor".

area. There was no more waste and no more waste pickers in that area with new recycling waste containers.

With the placement of recycling waste containers, whose aim was to prevent waste pickers from entering the area, "the luddites movement"[51] accelerated. The hatred against an object leads to a war against it. As a matter of fact, the waste pickers were doing already an illegal practice by collecting waste. They, by definition of law and according to police, were thieves, stealing waste, which they had done over ten years:

> I have collected waste since I moved to Istanbul. The army burned out my village, and I had to leave. In my village, the military troops told us that we were "terrorists" while I did not know the meaning of the word terrorist. Now I am being told that I am a "thief" in İstanbul. The state always finds strange names to call us, or to kick us out.[52]

Forced-immigrant waste pickers say that the state wants them to abandon Tarlabaşı. The fact is that, Tarlabaşı was in a process of urban transformation, and the residents of the district consisted of forced-immigrant Kurdish people. The state actions towards the waste pickers are not only for economic value of waste and industrialization of the recycling sector, it is also to depopulate Kurds, Roman and

---

[51] "The machine-breaking disturbances that rocked the wool and cotton industries were known as the 'Luddite riots'. The Luddites were named after 'General Ned Ludd' or 'King Ludd', a mythical figure who lived in Sherwood Forest and supposedly led the movement. (...) They wanted to get rid of the new machinery that was causing unemployment among workers. (...) Workers sent threatening letters to employers and broke into factories to destroy the new machines, such as the new wide weaving frames. They also attacked employers, magistrates and food merchants. There were fights between Luddites and government soldiers". *The National Archives.* n.d. http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/politics/g3/ (accessed August 20, 1014).

"İstannbul'a geldiğimden beri çöp topladım. Askerler köyümü yaktı ve gittim. Köydeyken askerler "terorist" olduğumuzu söylüyorlardı, terörris nedir de bilmiyordum. İstanbul'da "hırsız" olduğumu söylüyorlar. Devlet daima değişik isimler bize bulup kovuyorlar bir yerden."

poor residents of the district for the new urban structural transformation of Tarlabaşı.[53]

Waste pickers started to develop plans to continue to work and live in Tarlabaşı. However, the plan of "protests" by the internally displaced Kurds did not consist of a large frame in the city life. They were used to living in Kurdish villages, and even in the intense political atmosphere of Kurdistan, at the time of internal war between the PKK and the Turkish army, and meetings, protests and other *symbolically* urban-based political movements were not the accustomed style of dealing with obstacles and hindrances in the city for waste pickers. The way they think about meetings, protests, and boycotts was that they seemed "funny", "nonsensical" and "useless".

> I see people always on Taksim and İstiklal gathering, walking and chanting. For a long time I didn't understand what they did and why they were doing it. Later, I understood that they were protesting something they didn't want to happen, or to change something, but I still don't understand how it works. It just seems nonsensical and useless. They only have a lot fun doing that. Why should the state do something for just because they are walking and chanting on the streets? I will never do anything like that for our problems[54]

For them, those forms of movement are not even an indirect way achieving the demands that people pursue; the protestors do it as a form of enjoyment. The useful way to eliminate problems, for them, is to eliminate the reason that makes problems emerge. Now the problem is not picking waste is illegal and recycling waste containers do not let them find waste.

---

[53] During this thesis was written (2014) most of the Kurds and Romans were removed from Tarlabaşı and a huge urban transformation plan was in process.

[54] "Sürekli, Taksim'de, İstiklal'de insanların toplanıp, yürüyüp, slogan attıklarını görüyorum. Baya bir anlamadım ne yaptıklarını, niye yaptıklarını. Sonra, baktım ki istemedikleri bir şey için ya da bir şeyin değişmesi için yapıyorlar. Fakat hala, bunun nasıl olduğunu bilmiyorum. Çok saçma ve boşuna gözüküyor. Sadece çok eğleniyorlar bunu yaparken. Neden devlet bu insanlar yürüyüp slogan attıkları için bişi yapsın? Kendi sorunlarımız için asla böyle bişi yapmam."

Its prohibition is not a problem, since everything is already illegal. For having able to know what was legal and what was not, at least, I should have finished two universities. So we don't actually mind if it is illegal. When the police try to prevent us we fight with them. However, the enormous problem is the new recycling waste containers. If it is a problem for collecting waste, we should remove them.[55]

This time was the time for getting into action among Kurdish waste pickers to remove recycling waste containers. The leading plan of action concerned the recycling waste containers directly. Destroying the recycling waste containers was not the first plan of action, but the evolution of debates about what should be done, at least for collecting waste even now – henceforth its illegality – resulted in the decision to destroy the recycling waste containers.

The chosen time of destruction was at night, in the dark. A group of waste pickers prepared weapons and tools for breaking down the waste containers:

We found axes and some metal and wooden sticks. However for us, of course, the most useful weapons are stones. For obtaining rocks, we had to demolish the sidewalk. The street was not so empty, there were a few people, but we made sure there were no police. None of us thought about collecting waste that night. Our aim was to demolish those waste containers. And the next day we would collect waste again.[56]

The movement of waste pickers does not aim to develop a form of resistance against the state or government of the city. The target of the movement is simply the recycling waste containers, an object. Their destruction was simply to remove yet another obstacle to their collecting waste. For the same reason, they later damaged garbage trucks, which further prevented the municipality from collecting waste.

---

[55] "Yasak olması önemli değil, çünkü zaten her şey yasak. Neyin yasak olup neyin olmadığını billebilmem için iki üniversite bitirmeliydim. Bu yüzden aslında yasak olmasını çok takmıyoruz. Polis bırakmıyorsa onlarla kavga ediyoruz. Fakat, büyük bela yeni geri dönüşüp çöp koteynırları. Çöp toplamak için sorun olacaksa, onları kaldırmalıyız biz".

[56] "Bir iki tane balta, demir ve ağaç sopalar bulduk. Ama, yine de en iyisi bizim için taşlardı. Taşları da kaldırımları bozarak hallettik. Sokak boş sayılırdı, sadece bir kaç kişi vardı, fakat polisin olmadığı kessindi. O gece hiç birimiz çöp toplamayı aklına koymadı. Bütün amacımız çöp koteynırlarını parçalamaktı. Fakat, yarın yine çöp toplayacaktık."

The annihilation of waste containers, damaging the garbage trucks and so on continued off-and-on for a short period. Encountering police during waste collection always resulted in physical confrontations. Therefore, each encounter, literally, potentially leads to fighting. The resistance occurs individually and accidentally. However, fighting as a form of resistance between two unequal subjects, even in the short run, is disadvantageous for the weak subjects. The waste pickers who attempted to annihilate recycling waste containers, garbage trucks, and damaging streets were captured by security street cameras, and put on trial for damaging public property. Police department created police teams specifically assigned to deal with the waste pickers. Because the waste pickers were usually far outnumbered by the police, the fights always resulted in the waste pickers' defeat.

The strategy of eliminating obstacles to collecting waste and literally resisting individually and accidentally in the case of encounters with the police caused many dead-ends and failures. Unsurprisingly, to reduce the amount of losses that result from these confrontations with the police, the number of confrontations with the police had to be reduced. While forgoing the resistance against police, they still continued collecting waste where it was available. But, to pick waste they had to find a new tactic to get rid of the police interferenc and violence. The best way to do that was to minimalize the possible encounters with police. Tarlabaşı, due to its structure, environment, building composition, narrow streets and corridors paves a great opportunity for waste pickers to develop tactics for escaping from the police.

However, the process of losing what they had gained from the beginning with the practices of quiet encroachment turns to be a process of self-awareness and of becoming a politically-conscious subject. The losing process, first of all, clarifies what kind of a space they actually had in Tarlabaşı without any political movement

42

or resistance practices, but only by the practice of quiet encroachment. Asef Bayat explains about the squatters in Tehran in 1976, street vendors in the 1980s and street riots by the squatters in several cities in the early 1990s: "once their gains are threatened, they tend to become conscious of their doings and the value of their gains, often defending them in collective and audible fashion".[57] Kurdish waste pickers have never organized such movements by themselves, but after this process of losing, for the first time they collectively attended the May Day event in Taksim Square, which is symbolically important for labor politics in Turkey. One "I figured out that I am a Leftist, whereas before, I thought back in my village that being a leftist was the same as being a sinful man." They generally found themselves as active participants in Kurdish and Leftist politics. It was again the first time they actively participated elections process to collect votes for BDP, a leading party of Kurdish politics.

Relentless Dodging: Run, Waste Picker, Run!

> This question of speed is important and very complicated as well. It doesn't mean to be the first to finish; one might be late by speed. Nor does it mean always changing; one might be invariable and constant by speed. Speed is to be caught in a becoming that is not a development or an evolution. One would have to be like a taxi, a waiting line, a line of flight, a bottleneck, a traffic jam, green and red lights, slight paranoia, difficult relations with the police. Being an abstract and broken line, a zigzag that slips "between.[58]

"When we reach the entrance of a street or a corridor, it means that the police's dreams of catching us will come to nothing".[59] This is a statement of one of the garbage pickers. When the waste pickers make it to an entrance of a narrow street or corridor, it becomes impossible for the police to catch up to them. For the garbage

---

[57]AsefBayat, "From 'Dangerous Classes' to 'Quiet Rebels'" p. 550

[58]Reda Bensmaia. "Foreword: The Kafka Effect" quoted from *Dialogues* in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005) xvi.

[59]"Bir sokağın, yolun girişine geldiğimde, polisin hayalleri yıkılıyor"

pickers, the complex street corridors and labyrinths of Tarlabaşı and Beyoğlu

function as gates of escape, which makes it extremely hard for the police to catch

them. Each corridor entrance intersects with other corridors at various points. It is

like a rat burrow, with many doors and alleys opening up to provide escape from an

unexpected enemy.[60] The police run after a garbage picker until the entrance of a

corridor in Tarlabaşı. "He (the police) is sure that he cannot catch me (a garbage

picker) when I run down towards a corridor, because he cannot predict where I can

change my route and enter into another corridor".[61] The combination of connections

between corridors is extremely various in that each connects with so many entrances

and labyrinths of other corridors in Tarlabaşı. It is akin to a spider's web which is

also like a complex labyrinth with many escape routes and with no dead-end streets

and impasses; and gates are open from every direction. Police always prefer the

dead-end streets, which are literally traps for running garbage pickers. However,

Tarlabaşı and Beyoğlu streets are generally open-ended, to a large extent, eliminating

the possibility of traps for a running garbage picker who knows where he is running

to.

Formerly, as I have stated above, picking garbage was "outside" of the law,

which made it informal, but then it was defined in the law as "against" the law,

which made it illegal. When this transition happened, garbage pickers found

themselves facing "illegality" due to their work as garbage pickers. It meant that they

would not be allowed to collect garbage anymore in the way they had been doing,

and only licensed workers of the municipality and recycling industries would be

---

[60] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) 3.

[61]"O (polis) biliyor ki bir sokağa daldığımda beni hayatta yakalayamaz, çünkü hayatta yolumu nasıl değiştireceğimi, hangi yola sapacağımı bilemez."

formally permitted to collect garbage. The puzzle is this: forced-immigrant garbage

pickers did not take the formal license for picking garbage which was offered to

them, but they did not give up picking garbage on the streets of Tarlabaşı and

Beyoğlu either. To contain them, that is, to make them give up that work, police

departments in Beyoğlu and Tarlabaşı founded a special preemptive police group

named the "emergency response team"[62], which is called "A Team" among waste

pickers: "A Team is coming, run!"[63] is the signal for the potential threat. The police

run after a waste picker to catch him, and the waste picker uses the corridors of

Tarlabaşı and Beyoğlu to run away from them. The streets become their map of

escape by offering them different possibilities to get lost. It must be kept in mind that

the map is only qualified as a "map of escape" if the space has a smooth character.

Smooth space is a supple space that allows possibility for the movement and motion

of a runner – of a waste picker – to run away[64]. In an interview that I conducted with

a Kurdish waste picker, he talked about the advantages of running in Tarlabaşı:

> Police may be well equipped and stronger than us in some circumstances, but
> the corridors of Tarlabaşı belong to us, Tarlabaşı is our burrow (*hêlîn*-yuva).
> We are much quicker than they are in finding an entrance and running for
> another one. We know the streets better. So we disappear easily…[65]

"Unblock the impasse that is specific to… way out of impasse(s), putting it into

connection with a whole underground network, and with all the ways out from this

network".[66] Each entrance of a corridor opens to a possible escape gate from the

---

[62]"Acil müdahale takımı."

[63]"A takımı geldi, kaçın!"

[64] For the concept of the "smooth space" see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* 474-499.

[65] "Polis iyi silahları olabilir, bizden daha güçlü olabilir bazı durumlarda, fakat Tarlabaşı'nın sokakaları, koridorları bize ait, Tarlabaşı bizim *hêlîn*'miz (yuvamız). Onlardan çok hızlıyız bir çıkış bulmak için, ve koşup başka bir taneye girmek için. Sokakları daha iyi biliyoruz. Bu yüzden kolayca kayboluyoruz…"

[66]Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,* 10.

police. The police certainly can create maps of all the corridors in Tarlabaşı and Beyoğlu, but the crucial point is that they cannot predict exactly where a garbage picker will change his path; there is a huge number of possibilities to do this, because many entrances are connected to each other. An abundance of entrances designates many passes to be lost which are doors to be escaped. Whilst each corridor in Tarlabaşı and Beyoğlu is an uncontrollable hole for the police, each of these corridors functions as a safe burrow for a Kurdish waste picker.

> Another waste picker talks about the precariousness of staying at home:

> They (police) generally capture us at home. They attack unexpectedly in the morning before the sun rises, in our deepest sleep, in our warm bed… I only fear being captured at home at that time. I am scared of my home sometimes… Can you imagine?![67]

When one is at home, there is no chance for escape. Home is, in fact, a closed corridor, a dead-end space, or the end of the corridors opening to no other entrance. "I fear being at home, but I feel safe on the streets, picking waste".[68] Because having garbage at home is not 'illegal', garbage pickers are assaulted and accused on the grounds that they engage in drug trafficking, smuggling or stealing. However, the main reason of these assaults and accusations is to somehow convince them to accept becoming formal wage workers for recycling companies, or at least, to dissuade them from picking garbage by themselves. After unexpected attacks by the police, some of them are taken into custody on the suspicion of selling and using drugs, smuggling, and stealing. Then, they get out after a few days, and act as if nothing has happened to them. They continue picking garbage by taking advantage of the complex

---

[67]"(Polis) genelde evde bizi basabiliyor. Daha güneş çıkmadan bize sabah saldıryorlar, en ağır uykudayken biz, sıcak yatağımızda... Sadece evde yakalanmaktan korkuyorum. Bazen kendi evimden korkuyorum.... Kafana sokabiliyor musun?"

[68]"Evde olmaktan korkuyorum, fakat sokakta çöp toplarken polisin benin yaklayacağından korkmuyorum".

corridors of Beyoğlu and Tarlabaşı, and by escaping from the police by using streets as their 'map of escape'.

The Kurdish waste pickers' way to escape is not *tracing* but *mapping*. Deleuze and Guattari distinguish *map* form *trace* within the *rhizome*:

> (Map) fosters connections between fields, the removal of blockages… It is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification…Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways… A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing…[69]

Nonetheless, everything happens in the same space; the police run after a waste picker and a waste picker runs away from the police; it occurs in Tarlabaşı and Beyoğlu. Indeed, there is a game between the two: both police and the waste picker look for the possibility of the advantageous use of space. The police attempt to use streets and corridors to capture the waste picker, and the waste picker uses the same to escape from the police. "The runner (waste picker) is always more advantageous than the follower (police)",[70] said one of the waste pickers as he explained his experience of running. In the adventure of dodging there is one tactic, mapping, and one strategy, tracing, and there are two sides of the non-functioned unequal relations: the runner and the follower. The runner draws a map of escape, which means that there is no need to follow a specific way, or go down a specific entrance. Drawing a map is a tactical method of escape for a waste picker.

But the police, the followers, have to follow the trace of runner — there is no other way around it. However, the trace is erased when the runner becomes lost, which is likely to happen in every case after a short time. Disappearance of the trace

---

[69] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* 12.

[70] "Kaçan her zaman kovalayandan daha iyidir."

means the escape of the runner, which is to the advantage of the runner and to the disadvantage of the follower. Since there would be no trace anymore to follow, for the police, there will be no way to go after a waste picker. Therefore, a waste picker is powerful and advantageous only when he runs away; a police is powerless and disadvantageous only when he follows. Therefore, there cannot be a war between two unequal subjects, but all possibilities to run away for escaping remain there.

<center>Becoming Invisible: Having No Body</center>

Mehmet, a waste picker, tells his story in his notebook. Indeed, it is a dream. He is now 29 years old. He tells a dream from the traces of his childhood, from his favorite cartoon, Kespır (Casper), to watch it, for whom he ran to his friend's home from his parents' since they did not have a television. The story of Kespır (Casper) is a story of a child ghost who tries to be friends with living people. However, everybody is scared of it, and he is never able to make friends. For Mehmet, this main story of the cartoon is not interesting, but the qualification of that ghost, Kespır, being invisible whenever he wants, is exciting. Mehmet tells when he first did this work, collecting waste, because he felt shame doing this, he liked to be invisible, just like Kespır. Then, he explains,

> I started to give up feeling shame for collecting waste. I was no more an amateur; I was a professional waste picker. I gained money and supported my family. But, I still wanted to be invisible, not for any shame I felt, but I was scared to be seen by the police. Otherwise, I would lose my collected waste, my *Ferrari* (waste picking car), or worse, I would be taken into custody. Being a ghost could eliminate all these risks. The police would not see me anymore. OK, putting invisibility aside, Kespır, could easily pass through walls or through anything. Sometimes, when police see me collecting waste, when I was not in Tarlabaşı, where I could easily find a way to escape, a corridor to run to, making myself almost invisible became too difficult. Being

<center>48</center>

a Kespır would make me pass through these buildings, these walls. That would be an easy way to run away from the police.[71]

So it is strange for Mehmet:

> With my huge *Ferrari*, when I collect waste, nobody sees me, or they don't like to see me. A waste picker, for he is possible to be anything, a dirty man, a thief, a poor man, or a Kurd, people don't like to see him. They generally behave as if I am nobody, or not anything. However, why do the police see us so quickly? Do I become visible only for the ones who want to prevent me from collecting waste? For capturing me? Taking my *Ferrari*?[72]

Looking for a hiding place while waste picking is a form of job security for Mehmet.

If a waste picker is caught by the police, it is because he does not take enough

precautions against the police. He is partially to blame for his predicament; that is, he

did not find enough protection, he may have collected waste in a place which was too

open for him to hide himself, or found himself in an alleyway he was unfamiliar with

or in a place that was too crowded to successfully run away from the police.

However, in Tarlabaşı, Mehmet thinks that he can be a ghost like Kespır:

> I memorized all the street and corridors in Tarlabaşı. For a stranger to Tarlabaşı, she can easily lose her way. But, for me, it is the way of escaping from the police. As if I am a ghost who easily passes through one from street to other, one corridor to other, as if I am ghost that can pass through all walls. It is as if I was a ghost to be suddenly lost by the police. To be invisible. To find a secure place. Then looking at the police. Make you visible, screaming "I am here". Then again, make myself invisible, to be lost, to escape via complex streets and corridors. It is risky but enjoyable.[73]

---

[71] "Çöp topladığım için utanmayı bıraktım. Artık amatör değildim, profesyonel biriydim. Para kazandım, ailemi geçindirdim. Fakat hala da görünmez olmak istiyorum, unudığım için değil, polise görünmeye korktuğum için. Yoksa, topladığım her şeyi, çöp arabımı, *Ferrari* gasp edecekler, yada en kötüsü beni göz altına alacaklar. Bir hayalet olmak bütün bu riskleri bir tarafa bırakır. Polis daha beni göremeyecek. Tamam, görünmeme orda kalsın, Kespır (Casper) duvarları kolayca geçerdi, yada her şeyi kolayca geçerdi. Bazen, kolaylca bir yol bulduğum, kendimi kaybettiğim, kurtulduğum Tarlabaşının dışında çöp topladığımda polis beni görünce görünmez olmak o kadar zorlaşıyorki. Kespır olmak bu binaların, bu duvarların arasında beni kolayca geçirirdi."

[72] "Kocaman *Ferraririmle* çöp topladığımda kimse beni görmüyor, farketmiyor, yada beni görmek onların hoşlarına gitmiyor. Bir çöp toplayısı, hehangi bir şey, pis biri, hırsız biri, yoksul biri, yada bir Kürt olabileceğini sandıkları için onu görmek istemezler. Sanki ben hiç kimseyim yada hiçbir şeyim gibi çoğu zaman davranırlar. Fakat, neden polisler bizi hemen çabucak görürler? Sadece birisine çöp toplamamı bırakmasın diye mi görünüyorum? Beni yakalaması için. *Ferrarimi* alması için."

[73] "Tarlabaşındaki bütün cadde ve sokaklar ezberimde var. Tarlabaşına yabancı birisi kolayca yolunu kaybedebilir. Fakat, benim için bunlar polisten kaçmak için bir kaçış yoludur. Sanki bir

Acting like a ghost is a way to escape from the police, by being invisible and passing through streets and alleys. Mehmet writes, "When I become a ghost, as if I have no body to carry, as if I have no *Ferrari* to pull. I am like pure air, easily going around, looking around"[74] Mehmet has only *intensities*, the moment of being too weightless, the moment when power cannot diffuse into him. If for Foucault, the body is the object of power[75], and since Mehmet has no body, power cannot diffuse into him. Power can neither capture nor make him docile. Therefore, being a ghost is to escape permanently.

Conclusion

The practices of Kurdish waste pickers, after intervention of power, were shaped with the aim of reducing or eliminating the relations between themselves and the power. The elimination of relations does not produce a free autonomous space, but there are always practices that provide ways to escape from power. Since the concept of *escape* has a thematic intervention in later chapters of this thesis about writing and aesthetic practices of the Kurdish waste pickers, I would like to say a few words about the distinctions between escape, freedom/autonomy and resistance.

Escape does not mean freedom but it is a practice of freedom[76]. It only creates a *distance* or a temporary safe space from the police, the power, the ideology or the

---

hayalet gibiyim, bir caddeden diğerine geçen, bir soskaktan diğerine geçen, sanki bir hayalet gibiyim bütün duvarları delip geçen. Görünmemek. Sağlam bir yere bulmak. Sonra, tekrar görünüp, polise bakıp "ben burdayım demek" diye bağırmak. Sonra tekrar görünmez olmak, kaybolmak, bu karmaşık cadde ve sokaklar sayesinde kaybolup kurtulmak. Riskli ama bana hoş geliyor."

[74] "Bir hayalete dönüştüğümde sanki taşıyacak bir vucudum yokmuş gibi, sanki arkamdan çekecek bir *Ferrarim* yokmuş gibi. Sadece sade bir hava gibiyim, rahatça dolaşan, rahatça bakan."

[75] Micheal Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Random House, 1995).

[76] Michel Foucault talks about "practices of freedom" instead of process of freedom. Practices of freedom do not sufficiently lead to emerge liberty as a condition of life. In this respect, Foucault talks about the process of decolonization in the case of those practices of people against colonizers power which are evidently practices of freedom. But, Foucault concludes that these practices of

signifier. The problem is not, however, distance. Distance is a relative term: sometimes one comes close to that from which he/she runs away, and sometimes there is a large gap between an *unstable* subject and power. By unstable subject I mean a form of subject that perpetually looks for ways out, passes, exits, and always testifies to all potential doors of running away in order not to be captured. To be captured does not mean only to be in custody, in prison, or simply being captured by the police; but it also means being named, pinned down, coded, identified, subjectivized, or formalized. Being a minority as a Kurd, being an informal waste picker, and being an "illegal" worker in Beyoğlu and Tarlabaşı is already outside of the procedures of capture. However, the ground never seems secure. Indeed, there is no secure ground, no stable ground. The stable condition of security, the safe ground only comes from instability of the self. Instability is being always in motion*:* running away from the *monster*: power, the signifier, subjectivizer, organizer, codifier, and formalizer – from the police. Being always in motion is being non-capturable; it means to be able to escape in any instance.

Escape does not mean resistance, yet it enables waste pickers to avoid subordinate relationships. The desire to escape is not an attempt to change the system, the structure; but it is actually a recognition that there is a monster waiting for you. Running to escape lessens the chances of contact with monster. No doubt, there will always be the police, power, the monster as one side of the relationship but the point is that there is no need to be a captured, kidnapped, signified self, as a pole of the relationship: between a police and a "waste picker", power and "subject", signifier and "signified", the monster and "victim". One side of the relationship –

---

freedom do not provide condition of freedom as general in later for them. See, Michel Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: an Interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984" *Philosophy Social Criticism* 12 No. 112 (1987) 113-114.

police, power, signifier and monster – is a rigidly structured side; nothing can be done by a Kurdish waste picker in Istanbul to traverse it. But the other side of the relationship – waste picker, subject, signified, victim – is the unstable side, always able to be in motion, capable of running away from the first side. That is of course not annihilation of the first side, but of the relationship. When the first side does not capture the second side, the individuated and subordinated relationship between the two would not function properly. When that happens, that is the weakness of the first side, of the power, of the monster, and of the police. The condition for disrupting the relationship can only emerge when the second side seeks ways to run away, and not be confronted by the first side. Therefore, the underlying motive of all the attempts is to minimize confrontation.

CHAPTER IV

ESCAPE: WASTE AND WRITING

The world was so recent
that many things lacked names,
and in order to indicate them
it was necessary to point.[77]

Introduction

In the city, there were rulers, philosophers, intellectuals, and waste pickers. Who should rule, who should think, who should write, and who should pick waste was fixed historically. Everybody was supposed to be aware of their own territory, their boundaries, their capabilities, their means, and their dreams in the city. According to the *order of the discourse*[78] all roles in society are fixed, assigned to such groups of people who have no free time and appropriate space, no proper sense and invested knowledge, no means and capabilities, are not able to write and think as intellectuals and philosophers. The matter that I would like to look at is the fact that forced migrant Kurdish waste pickers cross over those boundaries and do things which are not assigned to them and hence not expected from them in this "order of the city". The concern of this chapter is to trace how they do things that are not actually assigned to them in the discursive field of intellectuality, such as writing, producing a journal, organizing a conference and so forth. Then, looking through the intellectual production of these Kurdish waste pickers, I will point out a novel form of existence, being and formation that challenges the order of the city and the order of the discourse which was historically constructed as a hegemonic formation.

---

[77] Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (New York: Avon Books, 1971) 8.

[78] For "order of the city" and "order of the discourse" for the poor in the city, see Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003).

53

To be able to understand their trajectory of doing things and to get a good grasp of the life of the forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers, I employ the concepts of *deterritorialization*, *reterritorialization* and *becoming*[79] from Deleuze and Guattari, and *distribution of the sensible* and *aesthetic*[80] from Rancière. Deterritorialization, as a conceptual tool can be employed for transforming conditions of a bounded structural entity then reestablishing a new form of existence that differs from the former one. Reestablishing a novel form of being means reterritorialization of the novel form of existence. The process of deterritorialization and then reterritorialization designates the process of becoming. For Deleuze, the subject of becoming is no more a constituted subject and not even an organized subject, but one of *intensity*, consisting of acts and praxis. The process of becoming for Deleuze and Guattari ends with degrees of intensity. For them, becoming intense is a means of escape from "organism, significance, and subjectification",[81] which they call their great strata, the "acts of capture".[82] What I do in this chapter is try to understand how the waste pickers escape from *strata* through their writing practices. "Distribution of the sensible" demonstrates the order of the police and the order of the discourse which for Rancière is "an order of the visible and the sayable"[83] and the order of the ignorant and the intellectual in the city as an order of who is able to see and say and who is not. According to Rancière, distribution of the sensible is "the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the

---

[79] See, Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari , *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004); Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[80] See, Jacques Rancière, Jacques Rancière, *Emancipated Spectator* (London and New York: Verso 2009); Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

[81] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 159

[82] "Strata are acts of capture, they are like "black holes" or occlusions striving to seize whatever comes within their reach. They operate by coding and territorialization upon the earth; they proceed simultaneously by code and by territoriality". *Ibid*, 159.

[83] Rancière, *Disagreement*, 29.

existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it".[84] *Disconfiguring* these "orders" in that which was given to be comprehended by a specific regime of sense, and then *reconfiguring* a novel existence and being, and eliminating the required hegemonic investment of the perception of the sayable, the visible and of the doable is a political process therefore Rancière affirms that "politics is an activity of reconfiguration of that which is given to the sensible"[85]. The sense of politics, in this account, becomes a sense of "dissensus"; dissensus to the established and preexisting form of intellectual, to the conditions of writing, of doing, saying and seeing. For Rancière, "politics is the creation of dissensus. It is the refusal to recognize the existing order of things, not in the name of another order, but in the name of equality".[86] This refusal to the order of the discourse and order of the way of living is not done in the name of a second order, but in the name of equality. The politics of equality which occurs within the process of dissensus, rather than addressing the equality between individuals, it stages the dissensus between regime of senses; saying and sayable, seeing and seeable, and doing and doable, in other words, it is between regime of aesthetics. When the politics of equality is put in this way, the frame of equality first becomes diverse and complex, and second, it expands in a broader sense. That is the equality of what is saying, seeing and doing, and the way these are realized in practice.

---

[84] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2004) 12.

[85] Jacques Rancière. "Dissenting Words: A Conversation with Jacques Rancière", *Diacritics* 2 No. 30 (2000) 115.

[86] Todd May, "Rancière in South Carolina", *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*, Eds. Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts (New York: Duke University Press, 2009) 113.

> These are models of nomadic and rhizomatic writing. Writing weds a war machine and lines of flight, abandoning the strata, segmentarities, sedentarity, the State apparatus.[87]

Mehmet is a dreamer and he writes his dreams in his journal, which is named for the place where they are living: *Tarlabaşı*. He says that one day while he was dreaming in the middle of the day he did not see the police, and thus his waste-car-*Ferrari,* as he calls it, was taken by the police. And he writes a story and he reverses the order of the world:

> The people of the city put their garbage in the most important and secure place in their houses, since garbage has become one of the most valuable things. They put their gold, money and other formerly praiseworthy things just outside of the house. I am still a kind of picker collecting those things on the streets. Those things are very cheap; I sell them for a little amount of garbage. Garbage is the equivalent of money. Garbage is money. Money is garbage. The disgusting thing is money. The valuable thing is garbage. Everybody in the city shows great respect to me. Waste picking is the most revered job in the city. We, the Kurdish waste pickers of the city, are at the same time its oldest residents. Everybody came later, and we kindly took them in and gave them a place in the city. Everybody speaks Kurdish, but we speak it the best. There are absolutely no police in the city. There are absolutely no traffic lamps in the city. There are absolutely no cars in the city.[88]

The only way to think about the world differently for Mehmet is to dream it differently. Dreaming the world differently is a way of interpreting it and can be grasped as a revolutionary dimension of life. For Rancière, interpreting the world "is

---

[87] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 24.

[88] "Çöp en kıymetli olunca insanlar çöplerini evlerinin en sağlam yerlerine koydular. Evlerine önüne de paralarını, altınlarını, daha önce değerli olan eşyalarını koydular. Ben hala bir toplayıcıyım ve bu tür şeyleri sokaklardan topluyorum. Bunlar çok ucuz; biraz çöp karşılığında onları satıyorum. Çöp para ile aynı. Çöp paradır. Para çöptür. Pis olan paradır. Değerli olan çöptür. Şehrin içinde herkes bize büyük bir saygı gösteriyor. Çöp toplamak en saygı duyulan meslek şehrin içinde. Biz, Kürt çöp toplayanlar, şehrin en eski insanlarıyız. Herkes sonra geldi, onları güzel güzel ağırladık şehirde. Herkes Kürtçe konuşur, biz bunu en iyi konuşanlarız… Şehirde hiç polis yok. Şehirde trafik ışıkları hiç yok. Şehirde araba hiç yok" *Tarlabaşı,* No. 2, 14

already a means of transforming it, of reconfiguring it"[89]. Mehmet engages with the

world while he dreams and writes about it, and his interpretation transforms and

reconfigures the everyday life he is living in. Mehmet's written dreams enables him

"to express another possible community and to forge the means for another

consciousness and another sensibility".[90] Everybody dreams, but writing one's

dreams in a journal or in a notebook affects the perception of the world. For Roland

Barthes,

> …Writing can be deployed *without a site of origin*; only writing can baffle
> every rhetorical rule, every law of genre, every arrogance of system: writing
> is *atopic*; in relation to the war of languages, which does not suppress but
> *displaces*, writing practices where it is desire which circulates, not
> domination.[91]

Mehmet, in his diary, also reverses time: the time to pick waste, the time to rest, to

think and to write, the time to sleep and the time to do nothing.

> When the moon rises people of the city start picking waste, when the clouds
> cover the moon, they stop picking waste. To pick waste, the people of the city
> wait for the moon to appear from behind clouds. This is the time to look at the
> sky and the clouds. It is time to make clouds look like something in the dark
> because people can hear very well in the dark. They make clouds look like
> anything by hearing them. They are hearing things by listening, seeing sounds
> by looking. The time of sleeping is the time of sunrise, or is the time of
> anything else. The time of thinking is the time of cloudy times, or is the time
> of anything else. The time of writing is the time of always, or anything else.
> People of the city arrange time for doing one thing except writing, or
> anything what they want. However, there are a few days where there is no
> moon at night. This is the time of being invisible, being unhearable and being
> untouchable. It is the time of being safe, or anything.[92]

---

[89]Rancière, *Emancipated* S*pectator,* 16.

[90]Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*: *Towards a Minor Literature,* 17

[91] Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language,* (New York: Hill and Vang, 1986) 110.

[92] "Ay doğunca insanlar çöp başlıyor. Bulutlar ayı kapatınca çöp toplamayı bırakırlar. Şehrin insanları çalışmak için ayın tekrar bulutların arkasında görünmesini bekler. Bu zaman gökyüzüne ve bulutlara bakma zamanınıdır. Karanlıkata bulutları herhangi bir şeye benzetme zamanıdır, cünkü insanlar karanlıkta çok iyi duyar. Bulutları duyarak herhangi bir şeye benzetirler. Şeyleri duyarlar, dinleyerek görürler. Uyuma zamanı güneşin doğduğu zamandır, ya da herhangi bir şeyin. Şehrin insanları için yazma dışında her şeyin bir zamanı var, ya da ne yapmak isterlerse. Ama bir kaç gün ay hiç doğmaz. Bu zaman görünememe, duyulamama ve dokunulmama zamanıdır. Güvenli olma zamanıdır, ya da başka bir şey."

Not only the time, but Mehmet also displaces senses, like seeing by listening, hearing by looking. The content of the writing has no form. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "Expression (…) breaks forms, encourages ruptures and new sproutings".[93] The reference of the writing seems chaotic; in fact, there is no proper reference, no proper expression. A metaphorical explanation of Mehmet's sentences can be given, but dreaming and interpreting the city and people of the city in a different form of being or becoming makes desiring different condition of space and of times possible. Desiring that time in a dreamed city should work differently is a way to escape rigidly separated and impassable time. According to Mehmet, the people of his dream city can pass quite easily form one time to another time, and/or they can do anything anytime. They also do not just work, they also look, listen or contemplate; they "make clouds look like anything". In the end, the time of being safe, being invisible, unhearable and untouchable is the time of *becoming intense,* the time to escape from all "acts of capture", from three great strata: "organism, signifiance, and subjectification".

Halil changes the names of the places in the city: the names of houses, streets and districts which are generally identified by numbers by the municipality. He writes in his notebook:

> 4563 St., 3245 St. 3455 St. All I see is numbers. On the door of my home, there is a number. On my identity card, there is a citizenship number. (…) I changed them all. Not only the numbers, I changed the names of some streets and districts into Kurdish. Tarlabaşı is *serêzevî* (Kurdish meaning of Tarlabaşı; *top of the field)*. Our street is the *hevraz* (means *uphill* in Kurdish). Our square is the *rast* (*square* in Kurdish). Our neighborhood is *taxê* (*neighborhood* in Kurdish).[94]

---

[93]Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature,* 16.

[94] "4563. Sokak, 3245. Sokak, 3455. Sokak. Sadece gördüğüm sayılar. Kapının üstünde bir sayı var. Kimlik kartımda da numara var, vatandaşlık numaram (…) Hepsini değiştirdim. Sadece

A simple action such as translating certain names from Turkish into Kurdish

attributes a revolutionary meaning to the space. This act of translation is not a neutral

translation; it changes the senses that are attached to particular places, and

crystallizes a new form of perception. Halil writes:

> The places of Istanbul become more intimate only when I change their names,
> not because it resembles the village that I had to leave, just because it
> becomes different from the place I now live in.[95]

Changing the names of the places into his native tongue does not only make him feel

more intimate with the places of the city, but also transforms the configuration of the

space itself. The translation is not done in the name of nostalgia for the place where

he had to leave, but in order to perceive the city differently, or against to the

abstraction of space.[96] Getting rid of the numbers of the city, at the same time, is

getting rid of the abstraction of the city, making it rather a space of practice, a living

space.

Waste pickers' poems describe the relations between time, space and

experience. There is always a mimesis between a concrete experience and lived

---

sayıları da değil, sokak ve caddelerin ismini de Kürtçe ile değiştirdim. Tarlabaşı'na *serêzevî*,
sokağımıza *hevraz* diyecem. Meydanımız da *rast* olacak. Mahallemiz *taxê* kalacak."

[95] "İsimlerini bu şekilde değiştirerek şehrin yerlerine daha yakın oluyorum, bu da boşalttığımız
köyüme benzediği için değil, sadece şuan yaşadığım yerden daha farklı oluyor."

[96] According to Henri Lefebvre; "the 'abstract spectacle' is a double reduction: first the
heterogeneous spaces of nature and social space are reduced to the homogenous space of Euclid;
and next homogenous Euclidean space is reduced to the illusory space of two dimensional
representations. Space is no longer something concrete and opaque, that is, something to be
experienced and lived (as well as perceived and conceived); it is now something abstract and
transparent, something to be looked at passively and from a distance, without being lived directly.
What is seen is not space, but an image of space. Space becomes "intelligible" to the eye (but only
to the eye); space appears to be a text to be read, a message that bears no traces of either state
power or human bodies and their non-verbal flows. Certain basic geometrical forms -- the
rectangular, the square, the circle, the triangle -- are elevated to the level of the exemplary
(microcosms of the universe) and are reproduced everywhere as images of rationality, harmony
and order." Quoted in Bill Brown, *Not Bored!: Anthology 1983-2010* (Cincinnati: Colossal Books,
2011) 326.

experience.[97] In that poem, a concrete experience such as *love* is associated with a lived experience as practices of the working day, and of the object found in waste:

> Wherever I go
> On each hill I climb
> There is a little you
> You are as innocent as a plastic bottle
> You are as modest as plastic
> You are as likeable as nylon
> You are as precious as aluminum
> You are scarce like a copper
> It is like approaching a plastic
> It is like taking an antique one has seen[98]

Writing poetry, which is quite common among waste pickers, is already a deterritorialized style of writing, which is to say, there is no need to follow the established norms and laws of language. Writing a poem paves the way for crossing over boundaries of rigid and formalized structures of expression or, in other words, a poem frees expression from the structures. Consequently, there is no proper reference or connection to the structural premises that are historically accumulated, invested and cultivated. There is no necessity to bind words to a formalized content, since there is no possible condition to settle in that nomadic and fleeting form of language and writing.

In Istanbul, the Kurdish language stops being only a native tongue of forced-immigrant people at this instance, and turns into a minor language. According to

---

[97] For the "concrete experience" and "lived experience" see Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections,* ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 2004).

[98] "Gezdiğim her yolda
Çıktığım her yokuşta
Biraz sen varsın
Sen pet kadar masum
Plastik kadar mütavazi
Naylon kadar semptatiksin
Sen aliminyum kadar değerli
Bakır cinsinden bulunmayansın
Gördüğü bir plastiğe yaklaşması
Gördüğü bir antikayı alması gibidir". Yaşar, *Katık,* No. 6, p. 23.

Deleuze and Guattari, the term *minority* embeds a qualitative meaning rather than a quantitative one. "A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language".[99] When this minor language is once constructed, there is no more separation between things and language; between object and subject, between one time and another time, between one space and another space. Language is not anymore a symbolic investment of the real, but it itself is real. The emphasis of the language, things and subject, time and space becomes only *intensity*. Therefore, the subject of the minor language is not an exilic self even though the writers are forced immigrants; it is not a language of oppression, mourning and melancholia even though they are Kurds, and it is not a nostalgic language yearning for return to the past or to the place they had to leave behind when they were displaced.[100] Minor language and the subject of that minor language indicate the openness, escape and flight by way of style of writing in excess of structural premises of the major language through a typical expressions and non-proper form of grammar, semantics and semiotics. Beside this, a minor language, by dreaming and interpreting, and translating, in terms of content, looks for a line of escape, a space and a time to be safe. It is not language that cries for liberty; it does not propose resistance; it is not a language of war, but only looks for holes and ways to escape.

But, what are the implications of dreaming, translating, and writing? First, the sense of a *stable* world which is established and structured is broken down because in a minor language, movement is constant; nothing remains stable. Since everything is fleeting in that language, there never emerge appropriate conditions of

---

[99] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,* 16.

[100] Zelia Gregoriou, "Commencing the Rhizome Towards a Minor Philosophy of Education", *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, (Vol. 36, No. 3, 2004), 245.

accumulation and progression. *Ignorance* remains everlasting. By ignorance, I do not

point to a subject that lacks knowledge, inability to know and inability to perceive.

Todd May defines ignorance in the following way:

> To be ignorant is not to be stagnant. It is not to be paralyzed. To be ignorant
> in this way is instead to be seeking new possibilities, new formations. It is to
> be creating new connections. It is to move among the as yet undecided and
> the undecidable in order to see what might be created.[101]

 Second, the sense of an alternative configuration of the world emerges, and in the

reconfiguration of space and time, as a process of desubjectivization, designification,

deabstraction and deformalization unfolds. Third, having a dream, translating the

names of the places, and writing them down, is at the same a claim to *existence*, but

in a different regime of existence and in a different form of aesthetic. For Deleuze, it

is *becoming,* and for Rancière, it is a new *distribution of sensible* that both indicate

the existence of a subject in that reconfiguration of the time and space. And, since the

linguistic practices of escaping, in terms of both forms of content and form

expression, and form of sensibility, is not a matter of a determined political agenda,

the emergence of that always exists with encountering of the *impossibility.*

Writing the Impossible

> Expression must break forms, encourage ruptures and new sproutings. When
> a form is broken, one must reconstruct the content that will necessarily be
> part of a rupture in the order of things. To take over, to anticipate, the
> material.[102]

In the case of writing, it is impossible to write as a part of *major* literature for

Kurdish waste pickers, it is impossible for them to follow its linguistic rules, its

narrative forms, grammatical structure, syntax, and semiotics. It is also impossible to

---

[101] Todd May, *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 149.

[102] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 28.

write in their *native* language because of the absence of Kurdish educational institutions despite its rich oral tradition. Therefore, minor literature takes place in a liminal space, that is, in-between a major language and a native language which prevents the native language from being purely "native", and it also is unable to undertake the linear reproduction of major linguistic rules. "Members of the minority are unable to reproduce the ruler's language or to speak (and think and behave) exactly as s/he does"[103].

This in-betweeness enables me to approach language and writing from two directions. First, I take into account how they work, I do not look at the beginning, or at the end, nor how they emerged or how they vanished, but at the middle, at the point of their working.[104] Secondly, being in-between, regarding language, opens a new sphere for expression; it firstly transgresses the structural dimension of a native language (however, in case of Kurdish, because of lack of standardized rules and educational institutions, it is already a non-structural, diverse and complex language – a rhizome) and secondly, it deterritorializes the established laws of major literature. Therefore, a minor language is actually a third language; a third literature locates itself in-between, and goes beyond the borders of the two – the major Turkish and the native Kurdish. Yet it has a creative force, deterritorialized effects, consisting of lines of escaping and openness and it is "rescued from its literary overcoding in pedagogical discourse"[105]. Deleuze and Guattari indicate the deterritorialized effect of the Jewish language, Yiddish, in a major language, German. "It is a language that is lacking a grammar and that is filled with vocables that are fleeting, mobilized,

---

[103] Avi Shoshana, "Minor Language and Major Responses in the Field of Popular Music in Israel" *Poetics* 41 (2013) 487.

[104] Delezue and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 21.

[105] Gregoriou, "Commencing the Rhizome Towards a Minor Philosophy of Education", 246.

emigrating, and turned into nomads that interiorize 'relations of force'".[106] Therefore, intellectuality, regarding the subject who is supposed to write, to speak, and to sense, is the outcome of that in-betweenness, minority and nomad. The term nomad, instead of addressing an unstable subject that necessarily moves and migrates, designates a quality of language, as being in constant movements which are never coded, or territorialized within major structural language.

Waste pickers write about various circumstances and they sometimes publish their writings in journals called *Katık*[107], *Fazla Mesai*[108], *Tarlabaşı*[109] etc. And they have enormous unpublished writing pieces of poems, stories, letters and diaries. I have reached only some of these unpublished pieces so far. Some of them were not willing to share their writings. No one has written in their native tongue, Kurdish, for they say that they cannot write and read in Kurdish. This is the first impossibility: not being able to write in their native language. The second impossibility comes from the major language –Turkish – because it was learned neither within the family at the beginning, nor later in formal education institutions. In Deleuze and Guattari's words, the process of learning language and writing is materialized neither in a family structure as explained by the oedipal complex, nor within official educational institutions as in bureaucratic structures.[110] Each writer of that "minor literature" has not learned the major language laws formally, that is, its grammatical structure and its styles of expression have not been learned within an established structural process. The fact that it was learned in everyday circumstances, which is to say that it

---

[106] Delezue and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 25.

[107] *Katık* has nine volumes, and the tenth volume is prepared to be published nowadays (5/2013). Only waste pickers write in that journal.

[108] *Fazla Mesai* has two volumes. The writers are various, but they are only informal workers.

[109] *Tarlabaşı* which shares the same name with the district is three-volume journal, and the rarest one.

[110] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,* 12.

was learned in relation to the street, the market, the judiciary, the bureaucracy and so

forth, by definition makes it a political language.[111] Zelia Gregoriou says:

> All these authors explore the creative possibilities of a writing which, cut off
> from both its Mother tongue (immanence and sense of belongingness) and the
> Father (a double anxiety: to measure one's art by the standards of the big
> masters, and to escape the influence of a style once this has been mastered),
> operates experimentally, connecting the literary with the political, the
> personal with the social.[112]

On the other hand, in that language, nothing is accumulated, nothing is invested, and

nothing is cultivated but everything is "fleeting, mobilized, emigrating, and turned

into nomads".[113] Actually, it comes from the experience, that is, from what is lived at

that time, in that space. Its emergence directly relates to a specific combination of

lived time and lived space which is actually an experience in place of accumulation

and circulation of knowledge. Therefore, an accumulated, invested and cultivated

form of knowledge never becomes the reference for writing. Indeed, there is no

reference, not even semantic and grammatical reference in terms of the forms of

style, nor reference to the form of content and the form of expression in that

structural, accumulated and progressive language.

---

[111] *Ibid.*, 17.

[112] Gregoriou, "Commencing the Rhizome", 245.

[113] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,* 25.

Story of a Writer Who Has Never Written Before

Who can write is a question with a specific answer, one that attributes writing to a specific subject in the hegemonic, aesthetic and intellectual regime. This subject is able to write because he/she has a privileged status in the societies that embed the capabilities of writing, such as having been invested with knowledge, being considered as an intellectual, having the recognized ability of speaking and seeing. For having these capabilities in order to write, one also has to have time and an appropriate space in this hegemonic aesthetic regime that configures life. However, when forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers write, these conditions and privileges are cast into doubt. Of course waste pickers and 'writers' do not write on the same things, not in the same way, and not within the same structures.

The significance of writing is always disputing the configuration of time and space, knowledge and sense. Initially, the writing of forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers challenges the prominent discourse about writing to the effect that it cannot be done by those who are not able to find time since they are "informal" and "manual" workers. Adil – who had come to Istanbul from Hakkari – says that finding time to write is the easiest issue:

> I can write wherever and whenever I want to write. My work is not a regularized job. I have no boss to tell me what I must do and when I must do it and how I must do it. I am my own boss; I am always generous in giving myself time (laughing). When I feel that I should write something, I stop picking waste, and sit down to write, usually on pieces of paper which I collect from the garbage, then at home I rewrite them in my notebook.[114]

There is therefore no division of time into working time and leisure time. Intellectuality and writing are not fixed in an ordered and formalized time. Informal

---

[114] "Nerde ve ne zaman istersem yazarım. Düzenli bir işim yok. Bana emir verecek bir patronum yok neyi nasıl, ne zama yapaağımı söylecek. Ben kendi patronuyum, kendime zaman vermede cömertim (gülüyor). Bişi yazmak istediğimde, çöp toplamayı bırakıp yazarım, topladığım kağıtlar üzerine, sonra da evde defterime geçiririm."

conditions of working dispute the division of time not only in terms of working time and leisure time but even in terms of daytime and nighttime.

> There is no specific time to collect waste on the streets, at night or during the day, at this hour or at that hour. There is no specific time for work or having leisure time. There is no specific place to collect waste, in this place or in that place.[115]

Mehmet also has written in his notebook on the issue of time. He has written about time – as something city people should or do dream of – as a desire. The separation of time, ironically, is set for the everyday lives of most urban people, in that they have set expectations about what they should do in what times. But, behind this ironical approach, he proposes an "anything else" category to the people of the city. People of the city can do things at a certain time, but at that time they can also do "anything else":

> The time of sleeping is the time of sunrise, or is the time of anything else. The time of thinking is the time of cloudy times, or is the time of anything else. The time of writing is the time of always, or anything else.

Secondly, this writing is a challenge to the notion that a "non-cultivated" subject cannot write, because he/she has neither the "means" nor the "ability" to write. Means and ability are two terms that only can be gained through specific "intellectual" processes which are located in the sphere of "mental" labour, and outside of "manual" labour. The question of who can write finds its answer in the "mentally invested" person. Therefore, the assumption is not only that there is a dichotomy of "mental" and "manual", it is also assumed that "mental" is something previously empty and homogenous that can be filled up with knowledge or anything that facilitates a subject to be cultivated intellectually for writing. The process for

---

[115]"Sokakta çöp toplamanın bir zamanı yok, gece ya da gündüz, bu saatte ya da şu saatte. Boş zamanın bir zamanı yok. Çöp toplamamanın bir yeri yor; burda ya da şurda." *Katık*, No. 3, 12

this facilitation for writing is a formalized and class-based process; that is to say, there are social and economic requirements involved in that process. The entire question of who can afford to acquire these requirements to be an intellectual has the right and capability to write, to speak, to know, to demand, and to be a political subject. An intellectual becomes therefore a knowing person and he/she is located as an authority position. The one who knows can be replaced with the creator, a position of being almost God, as Benjamin puts:

> God rested when he had left his creative power to itself in man. This creativity, relieved of its divine actuality, became knowledge. Man is the knower in the same language in which God is creator[116]

The great assumption of intellectuality and of the *critique* is that there are people who are able to know and those who are not, those who are able to see and those who are not. Having "knowledge" enables the subject to "know", to "think", to "comprehend", and to "see" beyond the appearances. Knowledge is the instrument for the subject to discover all "beyondness", all "abstractness". It is the precondition for the subject to "know". The dichotomy of the *apparent* and *hidden* presupposes at the same time the dichotomy of the *intellectual* and the *ignorant.* The apparent is open to the ordinary or to the ignorant, but to see the hidden requires a cultivated and invested knowledge. Therefore the dichotomy operates to de-intellectualize and de-aestheticize the subject who has no part in that discursively and hegemonically established form of distribution of knowledge, of role and sensibility. And Mehmet explains:

> There is a reason for the sun to rise every morning. Everything has a reason. For example, the price of paper is falling and we do not know why. Someone says there is plenty of paper imported, so there is no need for more. [...] I asked once, they said 'this is how the market works'. 'Does the market decide

---

[116] Walter Benjamin "On Language as Such and the Language of Man" , *Reflections*, (ed.) P. Demetz (New York: Schocken,1986) 323.

for everyone or only for us?' I asked. What is a market? I mostly get upset with the fact that they hide something. It is as if there is a curtain and if I lift it, I will see everything. But I even do not know if there really is, what is behind it…[117]

Mehmet is the one of those assumed to be ignorant, ordinary, lacking those "requirements" needed to write and to be an intellectual and a knower. Mehmet also is aware of the dichotomy of hiddenandappearance, aware of the distribution of hidden and apparent and also that the apparent is assigned to him, and the hidden is meant to be inaccessible to him. Without those requirements and cultivation, if he is still able to write in a journal, in diaries, in letters, what can be said about that kind of writing and about that kind of intellectuality if he is aware of the dichotomies and the distribution; aware of the place assigned to him within these dichotomies, and of his share in that distribution?

In the writings of the waste pickers there is no specific division between a doing subject and a knowing subject.

I have nothing in fact to put in my writing to distribute; not to make people aware of some knowledge that they don't know, something to explicate that they don't have, some news that they haven't heard yet. The fact is that I don't write, actually I do things.[118]

This is what Abdullah told me – one of the forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers who came to Istanbul in 1998 with his family when his village was evacuated – when I asked him why he was writing. Writing is not considered to deliver or transmit knowledge, to explicate a phenomenon, or to deliver the news; it is seen as an act, doing something. That is, not to *write* something, but to *do* something enables

---

[117] *Katik,* No.5, p. 10.

[118] "Aslında yazacağım bir şeyim yok herkese dağıtacak, insanların bilmediği bir şeyi bilmiyorum, bazı açıklamalara sahip değilim, duymadıkları haberleri onlara anlatacak değilim. Ben aslında yazmıyorum, ben bişiler yapıyorum."

a certain mode of visibility. Rancière presumes that literature is a way of doing politics; therefore politics is a 'doing'.

> Literature as such: literature conceived neither as the art of writing in general nor as a specific state of the language, but as a historical mode of visibility of writing, a specific link between a system of meaning of words and a system of visibility of things.[119]

In one account, Kamil, one of the waste pickers, writes in *Tarlabaşı* (the journal) about his workday in Tarlabaşı (the district). Kamil never uses capital letters. To respond to my question for the reason for that, he says actually that he does not know how to use capital letters, but he advised me to write the reason in the thesis as if he was against inequality between capital letters and lower cases.

> I do the same thing in Tarlabaşı (the district) and in *Tarlabaşı* (the journal). Both places have the same meaning for me. Writing became a part of my labour. I collect garbage with my hands and write with my hands, nothing else. Not only is the name of Tarlabaşı the same but also my hand that writes and collects is the same.[120]

Kamil always writes about the work day, where he finds waste, how people react to him, how he reacts to them, what he has done when he faced the police. He always makes a connection between picking waste and writing, between doing work and doing writing.

> That day one of the residents of Beyoğlu accused me of polluting the street when I pick garbage up from the waste container, and leave some there. I got angry. Later I calmed down and I thought that I do the same thing when I write. I pollute words, I choose only some of them that help me write, I don't touch others and I leave the others there…
>
> … The police told me that the official workers would carry out the picking of garbage in Tarlabaşı, since all garbage in Tarlabaşı was bought by Albayraklar (the recycling corporation). Garbage would now be his property.

---

[119] Jacques Rancière, 'Politics of Literature', *SubStance* 33, No. 1 (2004) 12.

[120] "tarlabaşıda ile dergi *tarlabaşıda* aynı şeyi yapıyorum. iki yerde benim aynıdır. yazma benim işim bir bölmü oluyor. çöpü ellerimle kaldırırm, yazıyıda ellerimle yazarım, başka bişi yapmıyorum. sadece aynı olan tarlabaşı'nın ismi değil, aynı ellerle toplayıp yazıyorum." *Tarlabaşı,*No.2, 4.

That is true; the words in Turkish I use to write are also not mine, I steal them, of course I can steal garbage too.[121]

"To steal the words" is to take the words form their proper formalized expression,

and use them in a new space of writing and of expression. This is

> . . . a method (of writing) – of picking up, even of stealing: of "double stealing" as Deleuze sometimes says, which is both "stealing" and "stealing away" – that consists in propelling the most diverse contents on the basis of (nonsignifying) ruptures and intertwinings of the most heterogeneous orders of signs and powers.[122]

Writing in that way "is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter

of lived experience[123] but finding a way of de-territorializing the form of expression,

and away of escaping the matter of lived experience. Therefore writing becomes a

"displacing" practice; words are being written in an outside space from where they

"exactly" belong – their proper place.

Kamil continues to answer my question, explaining the reason he writes:

> For an outsider, for anybody who has no idea about picking garbage would think that I am only a garbage picker. For some I am only a Kurd, or I am only a poor man. Yes, that is right. I am a waste picker, a Kurd, to be sure, I am not rich. But I am also a writer. Nobody supposes that I am writing. Therefore I am writing in order not to be only one thing; a waste picker, or a Kurd, but I am also a writer.[124]

---

[121]"geçen gün beyoğlunda birisi çöpleri çöp kutusunda seçtihim için etrafı kirletihimi söyledi. acz (öfkelendim) oldum. biraz geçince aczım (öfkem) gitti, dedim ki kendime, aslında yazarken de aynışeyi yapıyorum. Kelimleri pisletiyorum, bazı kelimeleri seçiyorum, bazılarıda ellemiyorum, bırakıyorum orda...

...Polis bana dediki artık çöpü resmi toplaıcılar toplayacak tarlabaşında, çünkü bütün çöpü albayraklar almış parasıyla. İdi (artık) çöp onun malı olmuş. haklıdır, türkçe kelimelerde benim değil, onlarıda çalıyorum, tabi çöpte çalarım". Kamil, *Tarlabaşı,*No.2, 5.

[122]Bensmaia, "Foreword: The Kafka Effect", xvi.

[123]Deleuze, *Essays critical and clinical*, 1.

[124]"Dışardan kimsenin bir firki çöp toplamakla ilgili olmadığı için bana bakınca benim sadece çöp toplayıcı olduğumu söyler. Bazıları için ben sadece bir Kürd'üm, ya da sadece bir fakirim, Evet, doğru. Çöp topluyorum , bir Kürd'üm, muhakka da zengin değilim. Fakat ben bir deyazıyorum. Kimse bunu beklemez. Bu yüzden, sadece tek bişi olmamak için yazıyorum, sadece bir Kürt değil, sadece bir toplayıcı değil, bir de ben yazarım".

Being a writer, or just writing, for Kamil, is to be more than one, actually being

multiple; that is the declaration of being able to *know*, able to *see* and able to *think*.

All of these abilities display the ability to act. Writing is an act of changing the form

of sensibility which is imposed on them. "I am not only a Kurd, a waste picker, and a

poor man, but also a writer". Being a writer is being many but not a "cultivated"

writer is having a "stock" of knowledge. Kamil continues:

> I did not learn anything at school. I went to school for the first five years that
> only made me read and write. I haven't obtained anything to use in my
> writing from school. Street, garbage, people, police and TEMAY[125] gave me
> words for my writing.[126]

The means of writing comes from the outside, which is neither a structurally closed

nor a pedagogical process. The outside is never a stable environment, it always

changes, constantly updates itself. It is the locus of intensities and flows. Knowledge

therefore is neither invested and just exists there, nor stocked and reserved in the

subject's intellect and in the writings of waste pickers; it is always in motion and

contingent upon time and space, that is, by experience.

<div align="center">From the Informal to the Formless: Formless Politics</div>

The difference between major writing and minor writing is indeed a difference

between an established form of expression and a *chaotic* form of expression which

does not have a "form". The former imposes a form on lived experience and the later

frees expression from its forms. The first operates in the domain of the signifier and

the second operates in disrupting that domain of signifier – the established form of

---

[125] TEMAY is a formal waste picking firm belonging to Albayraklar Company in Istanbul. Kamil in the *Tarlabaşı 2* writes that, Tayyib (Erdoğan, Prime minister of Turkey, 2013) took possession of the entire world, and his son in-law (owner of the Albayraklar Company) also seized the waste.

[126]"Okulda hiçbir şey öğrenmedim. İlk 5 yıl için okula gittim, bununla da sadece okuyup yazıyordum. Yazılarımda kullanacak hiçbir şeyi okuldan almadım. Sokaklar, insanlar, police TEMAY yazacağım kelimeleri bana verdi".

expression. Therefore, the second form of expression is non-formable: it does not presuppose having a direct referential link to an established content, nor does it propose formalizing the content. All it can do is to exist in lived experience, in everyday practices, in the circumstances of the street, of the bureaucracy, of the market, and of power: that is to say, it exists in politics.

On the other hand, the emergence of the formed expression includes power structures and relations, force and authority.[127] The expression becomes a self-contained and self-referential process. Roland Barthes distinguishes two kinds of language in relations to power: those which are constituted within the power structure and those which are established outside of the power. Accordingly,

> there are languages which are articulated, which developed, and which are marked in the light (or shadow) of Power, of its many state, institutions and ideological machineries, I shall call these *encratic* languages or discourses. And facing them there languages which are elaborated, which feel their way, and which are themselves outside of Power/or against Power; I shall call them *acratic* languages or discourse.[128]

While the Kurdish language can be considered already as an *acratic* language as developing outside of the state power and articulating discourse against it, minor language is not only an *acratic* language that produces discourses against power, but produces possibilities to escape from power, from the responsibility of being a constituted subject, the responsibility of everyday life, from the ossified form of expression and content – in other words, from the categories of signifier, codifier and subjectivizer.

The writings of those who have never written before have an absolute distance from an established form of expression. That is to say, it is indeed a *formless*

---

[127] See Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature.*

[128] Barthes, "The War of Language", 107.

"form" of expression. Primarily, the space where it is written is a non-institutionalized space, the time is not a regularized time, the sense is not abstracted sense, and the knowledge is not a progressive and accumulated knowledge. There is no "proper" syntax, no "proper" semiotic, no "proper" grammar, and even no "proper" words and verbs in the writings of the forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers. The term "proper" refers to a direct referential system, to an established form of expression. Outside of the "proper", expression becomes non-capturable, that is, non-signifiable for major expression. In Rancière's terms, it is a different regime of sensuality, perception or a different "distribution of the sensible". That is exactly the way to destroy major established expression –a revolutionary instant for major language. That is the singularity of the minority that locates itself outside of generality of majority. The singular is always out of context, which is outside of the rule, which is a line of escape.

Major intellectuality which is put in the sphere of writing and language becomes the dominant constituted part of the expression which is considered a self-contained and self-referential system. That is to say, intellectuality is itself a self-contained and self-referential investment that indicates a specific form of subjectivity coming in a specific form of environment. In that environment, this form of intellectuality takes its place with the assumptions of "progress", "development", and "accumulation" of mental structure which can be invested in only through the established and formed knowledge and power structure. It then becomes a *hegemonic* form that normalizes its emergence and its formalization; it constrains the possibility of emergence of the *other* form. Actually it makes the *other* non-existent. This truth-claim of the so-called major and invested intellectuality brings about some crucial political discussions, that is, a debate on who can speak and who can write, and then

74

related to this, *who can demand* self-political existence. This is actually a debate on who can be considered a political subject, and then what politics is. Consequently, the question of intellectuality, that of speech and writing, is essentially a question of *inequality* for Rancière, and therefore the sensibility for perception was not distributed equally in the society.[129] If politics is determined as the capability of *demanding existence,* and the capability of speaking and writing, doing and seeing, then politics is assigned to a specific subject in that process of specific intellectuality, which results in the de-politicization of *others.* The *de-intellectualization* of the *others* who are not expected to write and speak, supposing that they are unable to *demand,* which is considered as a precondition of politics for Rancière, is *de-politicizing* the *others*.

The possibility of emergence of another "form", an alternative form of intellectuality in the case of forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers regarding expression, intellectual, writing and speaking, and existence and politics, is the outcome of minority language and redistribution of sensible by the very act of writing. The minority of the "third" expression and "third" language, in terms of intellectuality, has a different possibility on the basis of experience with sensual and tactile relations with the outside despite an abstracted one. This form of intellectuality points to a minor (in terms of quality, not quantity) intellectuality which does not need to have any of Bourdieu's political, social, cultural and symbolic "investments" within a closed class interiority.[130] And lastly, instead of regarding/seeing/conceptualizing politics as a form of demanding *something from somebody*, I look at a form of politics that emerges as demanding which relies on its

---

[129]Rancière, Jacques, *On the Shores of Politics* (London: Verso, 1995) 63-92.

[130] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* (London & New York: Routledge, 2010).

own existence, neither addressing any authority and power nor claiming to exist within a hegemonic regime of existence. Actually this form of politics is that of a self-sufficient arrangement, a kind of autarky: it creates its own necessities by itself, by its own means and capabilities within any conditions of life even seemingly in the border of "extremity".

> Whatever we requested from the state was never realized. On the contrary, the state requested from us more. We started not to request anything so that we did not lose anything. Since we knew what we wanted, we knew also how to get it.[131]

The point is this: not demanding from the state is to minimalize one's relationship with the state. The way of writing, of practicing intellectuality, the way of seeing, saying or doing within a different distribution of the sensible, of becoming, that is to say, a way of existing, already locate outside of hegemonic formation and formed sociality.

To sum up, the expression of minor writing and of its intellectuality *deterritorializes* the boundaries of major language and even native language as it locates itself in-between the two, and also crosses over their boundaries. Secondly, the mediations of making of a language of writing and intellectuality are not only to be in-between both languages, but also in the everyday work relations, the form of the market, and the power structures that make this language nonstructural and political. Thirdly, it emerges collectively through journals, conferences, and exhibitions. Lastly, its politics is not a politics of demand that addresses the hegemonic formation, but in a claim for existence in juxtaposition to this hegemonic formation which for Rancière is an aesthetic regime, therefore, a regime of existence

---

[131] "Biz bişi istedikçe develetten, devlet bizden iki şey aldı. Hiç birşeyimizi almasın diye biz hiç bir şey istememeye başladık. Kıyamette kopmadığını gördük. Ne istediğimizi bilince kendimiz de hallediyorduk her şekilde". *Katık,* No. 5, 23.

that never crosses another and that one never becomes the immanent under another regime.

Let me expand on the *deterritorialized* dimension of this intellectuality, writings and politics. I actually do not distinguish experience, intellectuality, writing and politics as having their own sphere of configuration such as mental, manual and sensible. Therefore, the Rancièrean concept of aesthetic is helpful in clarifying the non-separateness of the visible, sayable, doable and politics, which for Rancière is the presence of an "aesthetic community".

> … a free, autonomous community (an aesthetic community) is a community whose lived experience does not rend itself into separate spheres of activity, of a community where art and life, art and politics, life and politics are not severed one from another.[132]

However, the claim for existence of such an "aesthetic community" is about the contestation between a challenge of distribution of space, time, role, and sense and knowledge and the historically established ones distributed by authority and power.[133] The situation of a minority is a *re*distribution of all them yet is revolutionary at the same time and can be grasped as a novel aesthetic of life, which is a *re*configuration of life outside of the established form of structure. What is revolutionary about it is to *identify* first a configuration of space, time, role, sense and knowledge which takes place in a specific distribution of the sensible, with an established appropriateness of all: proper time, proper space, proper role, proper sense, proper boundaries, and proper knowledge which are imposed on the subject; and then it is to *create* a novel distribution of the sensible that challenges all the

---

[132] Jacques Rancière. "The aesthetic Revolution and its Outcomes: Employments of Autonomy and Heteronomy" *New left Review*, No. 14 (Mar-Apr 2000) 136.

[133] See Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant School Master: Five Lesson in Intellectual Emancipation,* California: Stanford University Press, 1991; Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor.*

properness of the first. According to Foucault, to get rid of all this *appropriateness* of the order, one has to refuse the "individualization and totalization of modern power structures"[134]. For Rancière this refusal makes the subject aware of other possibilities. Rancière states that "everywhere there are starting points, intersections and junctions, that enable us to learn something new if we refuse, firstly, radical distance, secondly the distribution of roles, and thirdly the boundaries between territories".[135]

The other possibility of configuration is a new mode of space, a new mode of time, a new mode of sense and a new mode of knowledge, knower and knowable, which are exactly in contest with the truth-claim of power which was established as factualized and textualized in a way of standardized and normalized forms in everyday life experiences, historically. Therefore our dichotomy is between "the first" and "the second", which, in the case of knowledge according to Foucault, works in the following way:

> The first kind of knowledge is . . . the knowledge that tells you who you are, what your proper role is, to whom you should listen, whom you should ignore, and, undergirding all this, why it is the natural order of things to be exactly as they are rather than another way. The other kind of knowledge is the knowledge that frees us from the first kind.[136]

However, it is not only knowledge that configures a whole life, or determines a space for the existence of the subject; rather there is configuration of space, of time, of sensible, of experience and so forth. Therefore, according to Rancière, our dichotomy encapsulates more than knowledge; the concept of aesthetics contains the seeable, the sayable, the doable and even the knowable. All these abilities determine the

---

[134] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4, (Summer, 1982) 785.

[135] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator,* 17.

[136] Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure,* (New York: Pantheon, 1985) 8.

existence of the subject in a certain space and time. The stack is that those capabilities were not distributed in an equal way in the society that results in the dichotomy of existing part and non-existing part; those who are counted and who are not, in distribution of the sensible.[137].

The contestation of the first and the second is a *way out* from the hegemony of the first distribution that frees the subject from being involved in a specific configuration of life and deterritorializes the form of the subject. According to Rancière, the matter of hegemonic distribution of the sensible is not a matter of the *exclusion* of the one who does not have a part in that hegemonic distribution of sensible; it is rather the presence of having the form of existence of a different regime, so to speak, a different distribution of the sensible.[138] The fact that forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers will never claim or demand to be part of that hegemonic distribution of the sensible, always addresses a specific mode of existence and a visibility of a different distribution in view of the sensible by the abilities they engage in the everyday life of Istanbul — the ability to write, to speak, to do art and so on.

Conclusion

Forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers do things which are not assigned to them, in conditions of informality, illegality, misery, penury, and precariousness in Tarlabaşı. Nevertheless they write, produce journals, hold conferences and mount exhibitions of which the object is always waste, the sociality of waste, the becoming among/in waste, the art of waste, and the aesthetic of waste, only elaborating on their writings and speeches. I reflected on the mode of existence or mode of being,

---

[137]Rancière, "The Community of Equals".

[138]*Ibid.*

whether it is claimed implicitly or explicitly, intentionally or unintentionally, in a specific space and time.

If writing and speech become the task of this chapter, I looked at practices of writing to highlight the ability of writing, and questioning the structural conditions of "having" these abilities and to problematize intellectuality on Rancière's footsteps. Who can write? Who has knowledge and what forms of knowledge are required for an intellectual? Who can see? Who can speak? Who can do what? The fact is that all of these questions are related to politics, because only the supposed owner of these abilities can claim/demand an existence, and while this existence becomes hegemonic, the supposed subject that lack these abilities becomes a non-political subject because he/she has no ability to claim this existence. However, the fixed preconditions of writing, or being an intellectual, can be disclaimed by people who have no place in that hegemonic regime of existence. For writing there is no need to have free time, or invested, accumulated and cultivated knowledge. There is neither division between manual and mental; nor is there a dichotomy of hidden and apparent; or a division of cultivated and non-cultivated in the writing of waste pickers.

When I looked at the content and style of the form of language they used in those writings, Deleuze's interruption comes into play. The fact is that, the language they use is neither Turkish nor Kurdish, but is in dialogue with both languages. The words they use seem Turkish, but a 'deterritorialized' Turkish. There is also an obvious effect of the Kurdish language on their Turkish; nonetheless, the determinants of the language are everyday circumstances and everyday encounters: police, market, power, waste and so on. This form of writing, which is actually a

non-form, non-structured, non-progressive and non-accumulated style, makes

everything fleeting and avoids any impasses.

CHAPTER V

WASTE AND ART

From the idea that the self is not given to us,
I think that there is only practical consequence,
we have to create ourselves as a work of art.[139]

A *pen* is one of the most common and trivial objects of the waste that the waste

pickers collect and do not put on the market. It has neither use-value nor abstract

value; it does not even contain fetish value which involves labour relations. A pen

within the waste, if one collects it for his/her private collection, has only aesthetic

and sublime value. Various objects of the waste are not collected for the purpose of

selling, they are collected for accumulation, exhibition and contemplation. With their

different colors, sizes and shapes, pens are among such objects. In Kamil's house

they are placed "at the best corner of the house." While holding a blue-colored pen,

Kamil told about his pens:

> I found this pen among the waste in Nişantası (a wealthy neighbourhood of
> Istanbul) on a Sunday. It was used, then thrown away; thrown away into the
> waste actually. It does not write. It has no ink. It is useless if you want to
> write with it. But it deserves to be placed somewhere.[140]

In his private collection, Kamil's pen now has a history and also a story. He

remembers exactly where and when he found the pen, and therefore he is able to map

the city spaces with pens he has collected. He is also able to elaborate on the possible

history of the pen:

---

[139] Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Eds. H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 1983) 237.

"Bunu Nişantaşı'nda bir çöpte buldum, bir Pazar günü. Kullanılmış ve atılmış, doğrusu, çöpün içine atılmış. Hala yazmıyor. Mürekkebi yok.Yazı yazmak istersen faydasız bişi. Ama koyacak bir yer hak ediyor. (Orginal in Turkish or Kurdish)"

His owner must have paid a lot of money to buy it. It seems expensive. Maybe someone gave it to him as a gift; maybe a lover, a spouse, or a friend . . . Unfortunately it was in the garbage. I wonder what would have happened to it if I had not found it.[141]

The pen's history was erased after it was thrown into to the garbage. When Kamil found it, it started to have a history of its own again. A seemingly trivial object of the waste was exhibited in the collection of an internally displaced Kurdish waste picker.

Upon seeing Kamil's efforts for building a collection made up of objects found in the waste, some other waste pickers were also inspired to do the same. They also started to collect objects for their own private collections. One of those waste pickers, Resul, particularly collected cracked and shattered mirrors. All of the hand mirror he collected were cracked and shattered; they were obviously thrown into the garbage for this reason. But Resul brings those mirrors to his home and creates a new mirror by sticking together the pieces of different mirrors; at the end he produces an utterly different mirror. Resul sometimes writes in the journal called *Tarlabaşı,* and there he talks about those cracked mirrors:

Why should the valuable objects need to be unbroken? Why should they always be a whole? Why should they be odd or different? Who is to decide what is beautiful and what is not? Who can judge my feelings when/if I find something beautiful?[142]

Asking what motivates Kamil and Resul to have a private collection of objects found in the waste in their lives may not be the right question. Since this is an aesthetic issue, one should ask what may prevent Kamil from attributing an aesthetic value to

---

[141] "Önceki sahibi baya bir para verip almış olmalı. Pahalı bir şeye benziyor. Belki de başka birisi ona hediye vermiş, belki sevgili, eşi, arkadaşı. Maalesef çöpün içindeydi. Bulmasaydım ne olacaktı ona acaba."

[142] "Değerli eşlyalar neden sadece kırılmamış olması gerekiyor. Neden sürekli tam olması gerekiyor? Neden tuhaf, farklı olması gerekiyor?... Güzel ya da güzel olmadığını kim diyor? Benim duygularıma kim karışabilir ki bir şeyi güzel bulursam."

a pen found in the garbage through a certain modality of perception. A rule, a judgment, a norm or an ideology? The reason why Kamil and Resul collect cracked mirrors and useless pens from the garbage could be explained as a subjective act. The desire to collect objects that are deemed worthy of collecting by its collectors, indeed, cannot be explained away with rational reasons or empirical justifications. One can only bear witness to the motivation of this act in speech or can observe the act itself, and see how things can shape human experience.

This chapter complements the previous chapter, which focused on the verbal and written statements of forced-immigrant Kurdish waste pickers. In this chapter, I will continue to trace new relations, new spaces, and new objects within waste pickers' practices and attitudes in Tarlabaşı by paying attention to the constitutive role of desire and sublimation process in waste picking. For that purpose I will approach this issue from an aesthetics point of view[143] by deriving from two main directions: *perception* and *art*. My analysis of waste pickers' novelty items will be developed within and around the concepts of desire, sublimation, aesthetics and politics.

While tracing the new, I will try to show how waste pickers escape from the constituted forms of truths, articulated relations, normativity, law, ideology and so on. For that purpose I will examine the waste and how it is used and lived outside of the market: in exhibitions, at homes, on bodies and in the private collections of waste pickers themselves. For analyzing the new objects, spaces and relations that emerge through the waste pickers' engagement with the waste, I will first elaborate on the terms of aesthetics, desire, and sublimation.

---

[143]Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, (New York: Continuum, 2006).

Aesthetics and Sublimation

According to Rancière "what aesthetics refers to is not the sensible. Rather, it is a

certain modality, a certain distribution of the sensible."[144] This configuration of

perception, which includes as I stated in the previous chapter, thinking, saying,

seeing and doing for Rancière, is a political matter. "What is given to us to sense –

how it is divided up, what is allotted where, the way things seem to belong together

or apart – is not politically neutral."[145] So, in principle, what aesthetics refers to is

neither an object that is "beautiful" nor a subject that is "cultivated". It is an *ability* to

sense the world with respect to seeing, saying, doing and thinking. However, there is

always an already constituted set of perceptions present in the world that assign

individuals what they can say, see, do, and think. This is what Rancière calls as

policy: distributed or given ability of senses.[146] For that matter, the politics begins

with a contradicted procedure in both negative (undoing) and positive (constructing)

way.

> I now propose to reserve the term politics for an extremely determined
> activity antagonistic to policing: whatever breaks with the tangible
> configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a
> presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration . . .
> political activity is always a mode of expression that undoes the perceptible
> divisions of the police order by implementing a basically heterogeneous
> assumption.[147]

---

[144] Jacque Rancière, "The Aesthetic Dimension - Aesthetics, Politics, Knowledge", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 36, No. 1, (Autumn 2009) 1.

[145] Todd May, "Literature and Equality", *Philosophy Compass,* Vol. 3 No. 1 (2008) 86

[146] Rancière, *Disagreement,* 29.

[147] *Ibid.,* 29–30.

As concerns the negativity, one denies what s/he is or what s/he is not against the constituted ability of senses; and in positive terms one claims what s/he is or what s/he is not, and what abilities s/he has, that is to say, what s/he can actually do. Hence, aesthetics can be defined negatively as "freeing up the norms of representation" and in positive terms it is "constituting a kind of community of sense experience", that is, an "aesthetic community".[148]

When referring to the positive aspects, the recognition of one's abilities other than what s/he normally does to make a living is crucial. Those other abilities are juxtaposed with waste pickers' efforts to make a living by sifting through the waste and they always, within the terms of aesthetics, designate a *new*. This is also what Rancière refers to as *double*: one is not only a worker or s/he is not contained in any fixed identity; s/he has other abilities, abilities that are outside of the fixed identities s/he is contained in. Rancière says that:

> The artist's emancipatory lesson, opposed on every count to the professor's stultifying lesson, is this: each one of us is an artist to the extent that he carries out a double process; he is not content with being a mere journeyman but wants to make all work a means of expression, and he is not content to feel something but tries to impart it to others.[149]

The move from *containment* to *expression* is the movement of politics, emancipation and also a movement of new spaces, new objects and relations that are aesthetically charged.

Waste pickers engage with art through ordinary, pedestrian, dirty and seemingly worthless objects that they find in the waste. This form of art, without doubt, is not a form of "avant-garde" art that happens at a specific time and place and

---

[148] *Ibid.,* 58.

[149] Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster,* 70-71.

requires a sort of leisure time and space outside of work. The need for an avant-garde art presents its possibilities for an invested and cultivated subject/doer of art that separates him/her from a spectator. In avant-garde art there is a division between an art doer and spectator; that is to say there is a separation between active (artist) and passive (spectator) agents.[150] However, this division does not apply to the waste pickers' engagement with art. They are active agents erasing this division between doing/performing art and being a spectator in relation to it.

The art that the waste pickers produce is neither "representational", representative of certain truths, nor "ethical" in the sense that it does not adhere to or aspire to engage with "high moral codes" of the society.[151] The questions that need to be asked could be formulated like this: What could the waste pickers express with(in) waste and how does it become possible for waste pickers to get rid of the fixed identities that being a waste picker, a Kurd and being a poor wanderer of the city entail? What forms of art could emerge with(in) waste?

Waste pickers engage with art through ordinary objects, within an undefined time and space and with no linear relation between being an artist and a spectator. Waste pickers' particular conditions both in temporal and spatial terms designate their *double* in the sense that Rancière uses it. For Rancière each particular time and space harbours several forms of time and space within themselves. Hence, neither the time nor the space is compartmentalized: the time allocated for working may also be a time for contemplation, for engaging with art or any other act that one may desire.[152]

---

[150] *Ibid.,* 1- 25.

[151] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*.

[152] Rancière, The *Emancipated Spectator.*

Waste pickers' desire to engage with art does not emerge with the intention of representing the reality or depicting truths and normative rules. This is the point where I introduce the concept of *sublimation* into the debate for providing an explanatory framework regarding waste pickers' engagement with waste, what it expresses and what kind of results it presents. The effort to deal with these questions requires us to think about the waste picker, how picking waste, being in waste, almost living in waste affect the processes in question. Waste is strongly identified with "dirt" and waste pickers by sifting through waste, living in waste are within the "dirt" carrying out an "undignified" and "valueless" ordeal in difficult conditions. Hence. the question is how the waste pickers dignify and render this "ordeal" valuable and socially recognized? What makes it an issue of ethics?[153]

As a psychoanalytical term, sublimation may refer to the delineation of the new, whether it is an object, a certain space or a relation beyond the existing ones. It is called the "reality principle".[154] The field of the reality principle consists of rules, ideologies, laws or criteria no matter how naturalized or empirically factitious those may seem as facts, necessities, moral codes or religious truths.[155] Sublimation goes beyond these facts, moral codes, and truths; it creates socially recognized values by "adhering to already existing values."[156] For Tracy McNulty the motivation regarding the act of sublimation is not determined by rules, laws and ideologies; the emergence/creation of the new, the elevation of the values of the ordinary to socially

---

[153] Alenka Zupancic, *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two,* (The MIT Press: Massachusetts & London: 2003), 73.

[154] *Ibid.,* 74.

[155] *Ibid.*

[156] Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1992) cited Zupancic,*The Shortest Shadow*, 74.

recognized ones comes from the unconscious subjective desire.[157] An object that

comes to existence through a sublime act points to a certain relation with desire.

According to McNulty, "whence the fundamental link between desire and

sublimation: desire gives rise to a new object, an object that did not exist before, that

intervenes in the world so as to transform it."[158] The new spaces, objects and

relations that emerge indicate a subjective autonomy since they are shaped by the

productive force of desire. However, they initiate autonomy for subject, for

sublimation creates "socially recognized values".[159] Therefore sublimation:

> . . . is thus related to ethics insofar as it is not entirely subordinated to the
> reality principle, but liberates or creates a space from which it is possible to
> attribute certain values to something other than the recognized and
> established "common good"[160]

While definitions of sublimation generally concentrate on new objects, "the creation

and maintenance of a certain space for objects that have no place in the given, extant

reality, objects that are considered 'impossible'"[161] are also significant aspects of the

concept. An act of sublimation is the creation of an impossible object which has not

existed in reality, in morality or in ideology. When the impossible emerges, it cannot

find a proper space and criteria to maintain itself in the existing distribution of the

sensible or in a regime of sense that fixes the ability of senses in accordance with

certain constituted orders, norms and rules. For Rancière, in this constituted order,

---

[157] Tracy McNulty, "Demanding the Impossible: Desire and Social Change", *Feminist Cultural Studies* 20 No.1 (2009) 4.

[158] *Ibid.,* 4.

[159] Joan Copjec says that "sublimation does not separate thought from sex , but rather form the supposed subject of knowledge, that is, from the Other. For, the satisfaction of the drive by sublimation testifies to the autonomy of the subject, her independence from the Other." Joan Copjec, *Imagine There's no Woman: Ethics and Sublimation,* (Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, 2002) 44.

[160] Zupancic, p. 77.

[161]*Ibid.*

which is at the same time a hegemonic order, there are subjects not included.[162] This

means that the constituted regime of the distribution of the sensible excludes subjects

in terms of their abilities for perception and sensible. The demand of those people

who have no part in this order is to keep it that way. Their attempts to exist, to make

their voices heard and to be perceived by the others all address the creation of a new

space, new relations and a new distribution of the sensible which is called

redistribution of the sensible.

I will attribute redistribution of sensible to the creation of the new. This is

how the link between aesthetics and sublimation is established. This relationship

between aesthetics and sublimation provides a productive ground for analysing new

objects, new spaces and new relations none of which did not exist before and all of

which come to existence through the waste pickers' practices in a new regime of

aesthetics, in a redistribution of the sensible. The subjects of these practices are

displaced Kurdish waste pickers and the objects of the aesthetics and art are

displaced waste materials. Those waste pickers' way of engaging with art will,

necessarily, be outside of the "accepted/acceptable" regime of aesthetics and art.

Rancière's term of "aesthetics community" is also relevant here. In this community

there are no divisions between life as politics and art; labour and aesthetics are

intertwined with each other. Hence, talking about art is also talking about politics,

intellectuals and labour.

Waste in Photographs

Waste pickers of Tarlabaşı hold photograph exhibitions at certain times. Waste

pickers take these photographs while going through the garbage. These exhibitions

---

[162]Rancière, *Disagreement.*

90

have multiple aims: to show the photographs themselves, which are always scenes with garbage materials and to show themselves while collecting waste in their daily working routine. The materials used in the places where the exhibitions are held are also collected from the waste; they are actually the waste itself. The papers, cardboards, boxes and bottles that they collected from the waste are spread out on the floor and some of them are hung on the walls of the exhibition place. Even though the exhibitions are held mainly for the purpose of exhibiting the photographs of the waste pickers, they also discuss the ongoing governmental regulations regarding the policy of waste recycling and the future of waste picking on the streets outside of the formal regulations of the sector.

The interesting aspect of the exhibitions and the meetings is the photographs themselves. In these photographs, the mundane events of a waste picker's everyday routine through collected and uncollected waste on the streets are shown. They take these photographs generally by using their so-called smart phones. Some other photographs decorate their homes and some of them are printed in their journals: *Tarlabaşı, Fazla Mesai and Katık*. Some of the photographs are printed for exhibitions and they visually voice the challenges waste pickers encounter during waste picking, for example, carrying the Ferrari in the steep corridors of Tarlabaşı (see Figure 1).
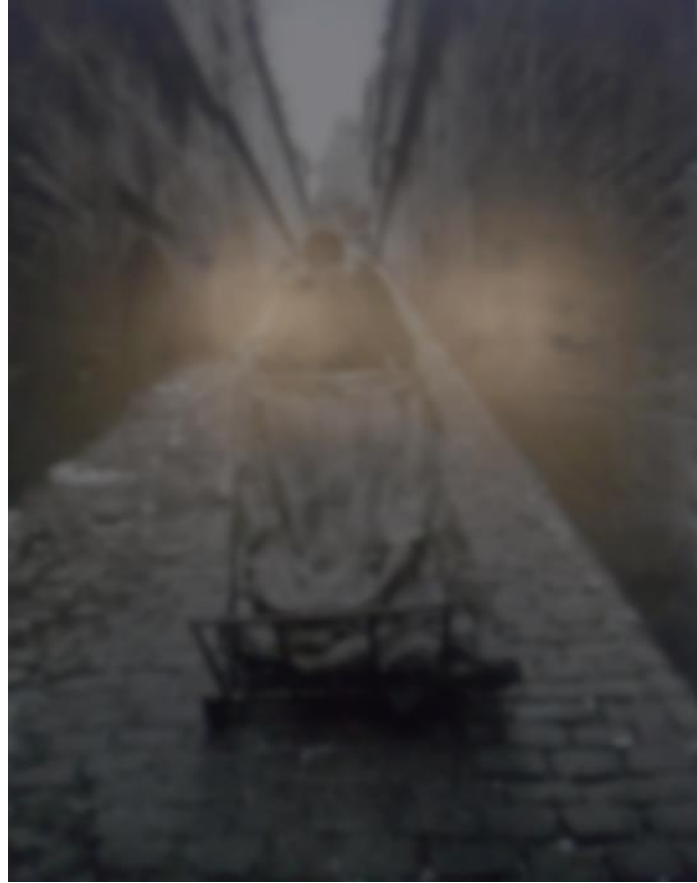
Fig. 1. Through the corridors in Tarlabaşı, taken by waste pickers themselves.

> When I first had a phone that was able to take photographs, there were a lot
> of places to photograph. The mosques, Istiklal (a famous street in Taksim),
> bridges and so on. But then I realized that I was taking photos of the waste,
> waste pickers and my friends. I don't know the exact reason for this. But I felt
> like I was not only a waste picker anymore, but also a photographer of the
> waste and waste pickers.[163]

The *double* of Halil is to take photos, for he is much more than a mere photographer.

When it comes to their writing practices and conditions, some of the waste pickers

insist on having multiple identities such as being a waste picker, a writer, and a

---

[163] "İlk fotoğraf çeken bir telefonum olduğunda, bir sürü fotoğraf çekecek yer vardı. Camiler,
İstiklal, köprüler vesaire vesaire bir sürü yer vardı. Fakat, bir baktım çöp ve çöpçülerin dostlarımın
fotoğraflarını çekiyorum. Nedenini tam bilmiyorum. Ama sanki artık sadece bir çöp toplayan
değil, bir de artık çöpün ve çöpçülerin fotoğrafçısı gibiydim."

photographer at the same time. The photo below was taken by another waste picker while a friend of his drove the Ferrari in Taksim square (see Figure 2).

Fig. 2. Driving the Ferrari in Taksim, taken by Ali Saltan

A photo of a waste picker in black and white. He is dragging a huge amount of collected waste. This photo was hung on the wall of the exhibition building. When I started to attend those exhibitions as part of my fieldwork, I realized that all of the photographs were in black and white and blurred. The colours of the photos are assimilated into grey when they print the photographs. My first possible explanation for this phenomenon was to attribute the existence of these colourless photographs to the melancholia that the waste pickers experience due to their working conditions, due to being displaced from their hometowns to be discriminated as a Kurd in the big city, due to being scavengers in the waste. For an established point of view or a form of distribution of the sensible, also for my point of view, black-and-white or grey photographs remind one of melancholia,

despondency and nostalgia for a subject which tries to construct himself/herself as "arcane" and "authentic" (see Figure 3).

Fig. 3. Unloading the waste from the Ferrari, taken by Ali Saltan

However, a waste picker explaining how he sees the black-and-white photographs in the exhibition demonstrated his particular way of sensing art. The attributed meaning to colourful and black-and-white photos concerns the regime of sense that determines what is "beautiful" or "pale." There is no mourning or melancholia in these photographs. The strange thing about them is that it is sometimes impossible to figure out what is going on in the photographs. Bereft of any colours and clear lines, these photographs are hard to read for the eye, for the observer. The lines are blurred; objects and people are hard to distinguish. There is only the intensity of black-and-white colours in these photographs. They do not have a representative function. The scene of the photograph is not represented. The subject

and the object of these photographs are not separate and easily distinguished from each other. Waste and waste pickers constitute a smooth whole. A person who looks at these photographs, one of them or me, for example, feels a great anxiety and also freedom since the photographs present multiple directions to look at.

It is hard to pin down these photographs to a certain concrete space, since the space in question points neither to the whereabouts of the photos nor to the actual place of the scenes. There are only traces to be seen on the bromide papers as a virtual reflection of the actual place. The distribution of black-and-white colours, their intensity on the paper, the blurred figures and lines promise a smooth space. These photographs are dotted with transitive spaces; strict and sharp lines are non-existent. Black-and-white offers no hard-edge dead ends; rather they lend themselves easily to their own shades and blurry visions that enable the objects or the scenes of the photographs to merge effortlessly into each other.

Waste in the Home

Collecting waste from the late 90s until today in Istanbul, waste pickers have encountered a great amount of different objects in waste. The exchange between a waste picker and the waste is not established only through the possible market value of those items. Even though selling the collected waste occupies significant space in waste pickers' efforts to survive in a megacity like Istanbul, they do not sell everything they find in the waste. The question, then, is what do they do with those unsold materials?

The items that are not sold are widely used in waste pickers' houses. Some of the 'extraordinary' objects found in the waste such as vases, bottles, pictures and other doohickey are used for interior decoration of the houses. Some other items are

used in the kitchen such as saucepans, pots and knifes. In waste pickers' houses waste turns into functional tools or decorative ornaments.

During one of my visits to a waste picker's house for observation and interview purposes, the waste pickers told me the story of the carpet on the floor of the room in which we were talking. The waste picker had found the carpet in garbage next to a luxury building. At first, his intention was to clean up the carpet and then sell it to a second-hand carpet store. He actually struck a deal with a carpet store to be paid "a great amount of money" with which he could have bought a new carpet. However, after cleaning up the carpet, the waste picker and his wife decided not to sell it, but to put it on their own floor instead. They simply ignored the market value of the carpet and chose to use it as a decorative, aesthetic object in their house.

The house presents a space where some items are chosen to make the interior more "beautiful." The objects that the waste pickers find in the waste are probably thrown into the waste deliberately. Obviously, the people who owned those items did not want to keep them any longer, for some reason. They were not "beautiful" or "worthy" enough to keep anymore. Waste pickers run into some objects that they refuse to sell and instead choose to decorate their houses with. For example, in one of the waste pickers' houses, glass bottles were placed around the room and on the tables. These were mostly wine bottles of different shapes and colours; and they are placed in front of the windows.

In many of the houses, photographs that the waste pickers had taken were hung on the walls. These photos, again, show only ordinary scenes and objects. They also hung some landscape posters and fantastic scenes on the walls.

For waste pickers, waste overflows with different objects that deserve to be placed in a private collection. However, Resul's case is different. He particularly collects pieces of broken mirrors from the waste. Then he puts together those pieces and creates a new one out of a myriad of shattered mirrors. Resul does not bring the pieces together very tightly; there is space between the pieces. His inspiration was the streets and corridors of Tarlabaşı as he explains it (see Figure 4):

> It is characteristic of here, of Tarlabaşı, to have lots of streets and ways that enable one to go from one place to the other easily. That's why I have left some space between the pieces while I was sticking them together. There has to be a line to go away, or at least I have to show that this mirror is not a solid one.[164]
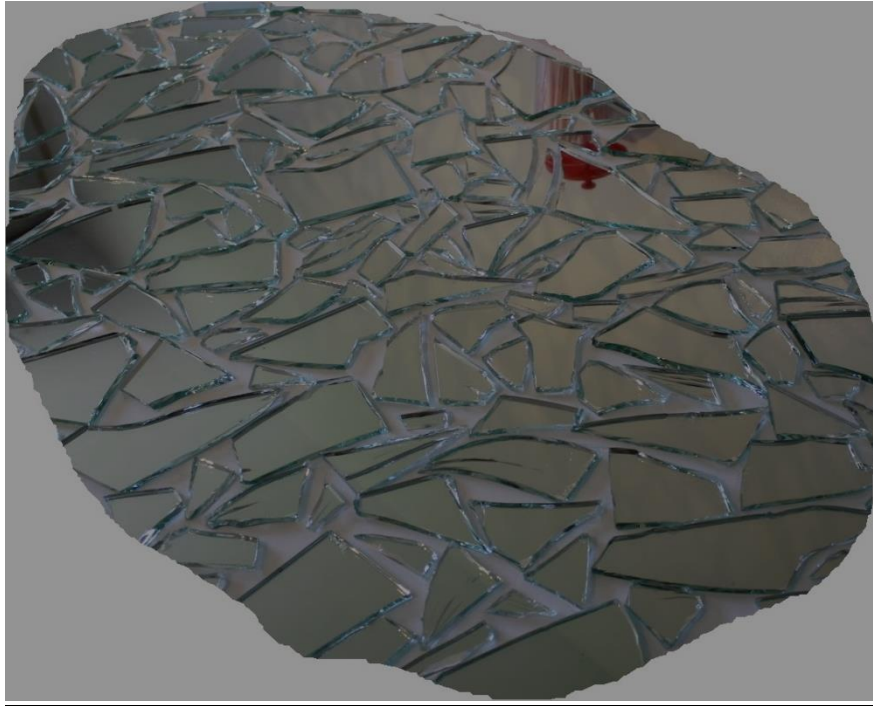

Fig. 4. He brings together the pieces in different shapes, not only in the shape of a rectangular or square.

---

[164] "Burda, Tarlabaşı'nın özelliğidir, bir sürü sokağı, yolu olması kolayca bir yerden bir yere gidilir. Bu yüzden, kırık ayna parçalarını yapıştırırken, parçalar arasında bir sınır bıraktım.Bir hat olmalı içinde gitmek için, ya da en azından bunun sağlam bir ayna olmadığını göstermem gerekiyor."

In Tarlabaşı, buildings are close to each other, but somehow there is always a way to proceed, to exit, to wander. Waste pickers are well aware of this since they make frequent use of this feature of Tarlabaşı. They use the narrow and complex streets and corridors to escape from the police who follow them relentlessly. Buildings do not meet with each other, walls never merge into each other; there is always a near but far gap between them. Resul's glued mirrors, all of them, present such gaps and lines between the pieces. These gaps separate the pieces as well as well bringing them together more closely (see Figure 5).

Fig. 5. The broken mirror collection

At his home, Resul does not have any unbroken mirror; his mirrors are all made up of shattered pieces. Resul and his family use those mirrors when they want to look at themselves. Resul tells this:

> The shattered mirror does not actually reflect one's actual appearance; the reflection is a different you, it is strange that it is as if you are not really you. The reflection seems like it does not belong to a human; it is something different like a reflection of another being. You cannot see your face properly when you look at those mirrors. The face you see reflected is a shattered face, but again it is not you.[165]

[165] "Çatlamış aynaya bakınca seni aslında olduğu gibi göstermez, fakat seni farklı gösterir, tuhaf bir şey, sanki sen değilsin. Görüntüsü aslında sanki bir insanın değilmiş gibi, fakat farklı bir şey

What the shattered mirror reflects is not the actual image, just like the photographs the waste pickers take. Resul's mirrors made up of shattered pieces of other mirrors do not represent "reality" or the "actual" objects. But he produces new mirrors that differ from the existing ones.

It is not only the shattered mirrors that are deemed worthy of collection by the waste pickers. Kamil's collection of pens lies silently at his home, "at the best corner of his house", as he says. Kamil has been collecting pens of different shapes and colors since the time he started to collect items from waste. He glues all these collected pens to one of the walls in the room. Pens cover almost the whole surface of the wall. According to Kamil, this wall of his "does not need to be painted" while each year he paints the other walls of the room (see Figure 6).
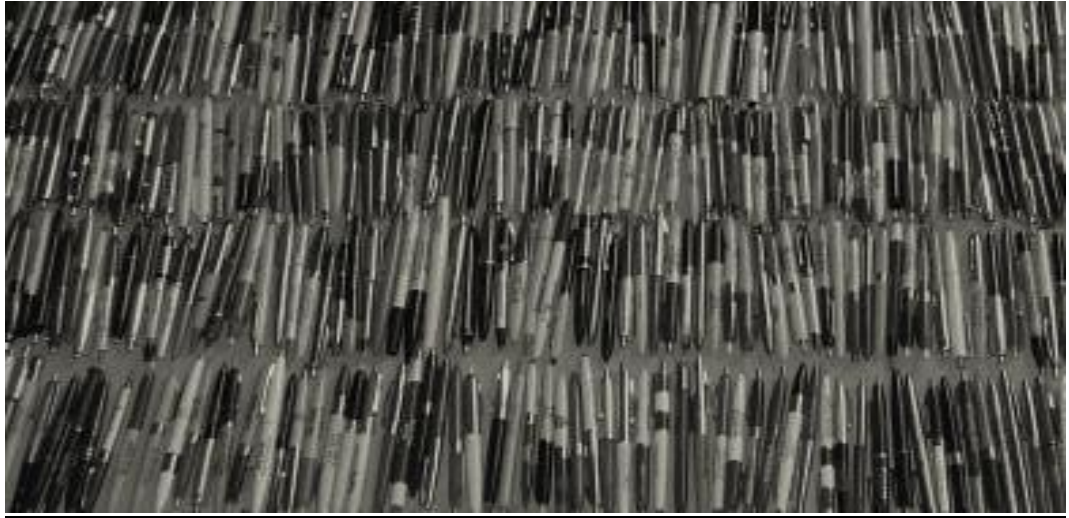

Fig. 6. Kamil's collection of pens gathered from waste.

None of those pens write any more. When they were found, they had no ink. They were deemed useless and thrown into the garbage. They are ordinary, cheap,

---

gibi, farklı canlı bir şey gibi. Bu çatlamış aynalara bakarak kendi yüzünü göremezsin, ya da en azından bir çatlamış yüz görebilirsin, fakat bu da sen değilsin.".

useless pens The story about one such pen, how and where Kamil found it, gives us

some idea concerning the pen's owner and the pen's possible uses at that time. We

can also learn something about Kamil's working routine that day. Even though

Kamil does not have any code or number to identify the individual pens on the wall,

he randomly picked a blue and white pen, which was similar to the other ones, to

show me. He then opened his notebook and showed me a page:

> 20 April 2010
>
> All night it snowed; but it isn't now. It was still very cold, the snow was everywhere. Hard to pull my *Ferrari* (his waste picking car). Hard to find cardboard boxes, papers or something to sell. Then I suddenly saw this pen. It had two colours: white and blue. It was not even in the garbage, it was on the street. It was a very good pen, but it did not write. Its owner may not be a wealthy person, s/he may be a student. This pen must have been used for a lot of writing, for courses in school. It was used, and then it was thrown away like this. I don't think it deserved to have been thrown away.[166]

This story/history of the pen in question intertwines with Kamil's history.

There are other objects in waste pickers' private collections. For example, a book is

one object frequently found in waste. Mehmet has collected so many books from the

waste through the years that he now has a rich library. Among the waste pickers I

have had the chance to know, Mehmet is the one who writes a lot. He even collected

books in foreign languages. Some of the books are in English, one is in French, and

another one is in Arabic or Persian. There are a few others in different languages that

I was not able to recognize. Even though these books, being in a foreign language he

does not know, are unintelligible to him, he still keeps collecting them.

---

[166] "Bütün gece kar yağdı, fakat şimdi yağmıyor. Hala çok soğuktu, her yerde kar vardı. Ferrariyi çekmek zor, karton kutu, kağıt bulmak, ya da satacak bişi bulmak zor. Fakat birden bu kalemi gördüm, iki renkli, beyaz ve mavi. Bir çöpte bile değildi, yolun üzerindeydi. Çok iyiydi, fakat yazmıyordu. Sahibi zengin birisi değildir, bir öğrencidir mesela. Bir sürü yazı yazmıştır bu kalem, okuldaki dersler için. Kullanıldı, sonra işi bittiği için bu şekilde atıldı. Bunu hak etmemişti bence."

Conclusion

The objects of waste are old, broken, dirty, useless, unattractive, wasted Those are the main reasons that they find themselves in the waste in the first place. These objects do not take up space in their so-called owners' lives. However, the concern of this chapter is not the objects and items of the waste themselves. The waste pickers do not mourn for those solitary and forsaken/forgotten objects of waste. The aim of this chapter is to show how waste pickers engage with these objects through art, how they transform these materials into aesthetic objects. Since I do not have an empirical way to explain how and why they do such a thing, I have tried to be a close witness to their efforts. And the concept of sublimation, which means elevating the value of an object to the Real, provides me with the necessary theoretical framework to understand this issue. Sublimation, however, does not mean to idealize an object; it is to realize it. The relevant question here is what happens when waste pickers sublimate waste(d) objects and engage with them through art in their living spaces and working spaces.

Thinking aesthetics together with sublimation to analyze the waste pickers' engagement with waste opens a new field of autonomy: to collect objects from the waste within an aesthetic regime is to destroy the normative link between form and matter, passive and active, subject and object. This act creates a space of autonomy since the act is not determined by rule, law, ideology or fact. It arises out of a subjective desire. Still this subjective desire has the potential to affect collective acts and spaces by transforming them. Waste turns into an aesthetic object and becomes sublime. So it becomes a different aesthetic object. Since it has its own values, this object is able to resist the fetishistic character of commodity and the capitalist market value.

Considering these lines of resistance against and escape from the rule, the normative and the significant, one should approach this issue as a problem of ethics. This relationship with waste creates a different way of living that includes its corollaries: acting, working, thinking However, stating that the new criterion or object of sublimation creates socially recognized values does not mean that these values are recognized or accepted by a large group of people. Foucault says that these people are only a "small elite":

> . . . The reason is, I think, that the principal aim, the principal target of this kind of ethics was an aesthetic one. First, this kind of ethics was only a problem of personal choice. Second, it was reserved for a few people in the population; it was not a question of giving a pattern of behavior for everybody. It was a personal choice for a small elite. The reason for making this choice was the will to live a beautiful life, and to leave to others memories of a beautiful existence.[167]

What Foucault tries to underline here is that the art of existence is realized by "personal choice." By saying this Foucault also mentions 'intentional" and "voluntary" actions, thinking quite in the same vein on the transformation of self whose purpose is to stylize and aesthetize life.

> … those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their lives into an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria[168]

---

[167]Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress", *The Foucault Reader*, (New York: Pantheon House, 1984), 341.

[168]Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Volume Two* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1985), 11.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The subject of this thesis was internally displaced Kurds. Actually it is a thesis that studies what happened after they were internally displaced. When they were forced to migrate to the western cities of Turkey, they did not have any economical investment to live there. What they had in their villages was left behind. Moreover, they did not have the skills to work as wage laborers in those cities, as they had never work for a wage before. They had never seen Istanbul before. They knew nothing about living in a city. Picking garbage and living in Tarlabaşı were the only possibilities to provide a living.

Given such background information about internally displaced Kurds, when I decided to study about them, I thought the story would be catastrophic and full of miseries. The truth, however, is that although there are catastrophic sides to the story, I did not choose to write them; it would not be the whole story, anyway. Moreover, the catastrophes and sufferings were not the most important side of the story. The abilities of making life in such catastrophic conditions were enormous and I decided I decided to study them. I decided to write what I bore witness to: that waste pickers, from labor to politics, from intellectuality to aesthetics, reconstituted Tarlabaşı as a space of autonomy and a space of life.

Therefore, in my fieldwork what I found out was that, for the remnants of the calamity of the war in Kurdistan, the tragedy of displacement and of the forced migration from the East to the West were not visible in their quotidian lives. Rather, their whole life was constructed in that informal space in/around waste as an established form with stable conditions enabling the conduct of a life. But this is

neither the life they had in their village, nor a life lived by many other forced migrants in the cities of Western Turkey; but this is nevertheless a life in a space of emancipation that leads to practices of freedom, with its distance from the state and from everyday modernity.

The informal space of Tarlabaşı enables internally displaced Kurds to provide a life with a large spectrum even it seems a space of uncertainty and precariousness. The basic method of producing a life consists of encroachments, that is, making a life with practices of infringements against the modern state principles. Such practices as using illegal electricity, leakage water, benefiting from health care services illegally and so forth, make modern state institutions insignificant to their life. In fact, waste pickers take advantage of what these institutions supply, but they do not follow a legal, formal and proper way to get them. However, all these practices do not come forward due to a consciously organized political sensitivity and a political movement. But the production of the life via these practices is still politics because the result of this production is, unintentionally and indirectly, a space and a life that permanently breaches the space of power as well as breaching a life that is imposed by power. The significance of this production of life on infringements is the making of a space outside of state power. Their bodies, their practices, the way to apprehend the world, and consequences of those, in that manner of being outside of the state control, allow them to escape form the power, the signifier, the formed and the constituted. Therefore, the informal space of Tarlabaşı turns into a space of autonomy by the way waste pickers employ the practices of encroachment for making a life, and qualify that encroached space by the practices they sense, and they construct a new world of living, by the way they speak, think, write and do art. It is by the way they intellectualize and aesthesize the life.

However, the autonomy of what they do in Tarlabaşı does not follow the same direction. Tarlabaşı, despite being a sedimented district, is still located in the center of Istanbul, next to luxurious and famous districts such as Taksim and Şişli. When urban transformation projects were put into operation for Tarlabaşı, it strived to eliminate waste pickers in that district. At the same time, the economic value of waste increased as the recycling industry grew and developed. And waste pickers fell into the danger of losing both their living space and living objects. When the process of preventing waste pickers' life in Tarlabaşı by both the police and the city government, the only thing waste pickers could do was to run away from the state's apparatus within the same space, Tarlabaşı. Permanent running from the police reduces a possible encounter with power; and the complex corridors and streets of Tarlabaşı allows waste pickers to run away easily and disappear.

The autonomy resulted from the practices of quiet encroachment when the state power was not interested in preventing the waste pickers' work. After the intervention of power, then, this autonomy took a form of an autonomy that is needed to be saved. But this time, the practices of escaping from power, which are running, fleeing, hiding and using the space strategically to eliminate possible encounters, also took part in procuring this autonomy in their life. Even in different periods and in different conjunctures of waste pickers' lives, being outside of the formal structures of the modern state and having autonomy in their lives and their work have become the most significant experiences in Tarlabaşı.

Exploring this *outsideness* or *autonomy* and this new form of space and life requires an investigation of what waste pickers do in their wasted space beyond the working process – what they express beyond what they are contained. What makes this analysis possible was that they produce writings and use waste beyond market

relationships. I noticed that waste pickers write a lot, in diaries, in letters that are not written to anybody in particular, on scraps of paper, only for themselves, or for imaginary characters. At the same time, they publish their own journals to make their writings public. At first, their written pieces are not understandable since they are written neither in Turkish nor in Kurdish. The fact is that the words seem Turkish but are written in dialogue between Turkish and Kurdish. It is a *new* dialogue creating a *new* form life, a new form of practices, a new form of experience and a new form of senses.

Writing "appropriately" in both languages is impossible because most of them did not have any formal education, and Kurdish in Turkey is basically an oral language since formal education in Kurdish is non-existent. However, the construction of this mode of writing is determined by everyday experience: picking up waste, market relationships, state power, encounters with the police and so on. The nature of this language of writings becomes political since it replaces the existent practices, experience, relations and sense with new ones. The *new* always shapes in/around garbage. Garbage becomes a political object. Life takes shape within garbage politics. Thus waste has an ascribed value outside of market relations and garbage becomes effective in the making of a new life in an urban space. Garbage is no longer something that is only picked up and sold, but something used to provide and indeed embellish their living space, their homes, the streets and their own bodies. Waste becomes an aesthetic and a sublime object that makes their writings, their speech, their homes, in fact, their whole life.

The intellectual process of writing and the practices of making waste into artwork enabled me to understand how they sense the world. Intellectuality and aesthetics in everyday life, for waste pickers, designates what they do alongside the

106

labor process. If I research the making of a total life, one part of it, with contribution of Rancière, is *containment,* that is, what they do to live, which is picking waste and encroachment; and another part is *expression,* that is, how they sense the world – which can be grasped through their intellectual and aesthetic practices. This *double*, containment and expression, in a totality, represents life. However, labor, art and intellectuality are not distinguished spheres of the totality and of life. There are not different motivations and specific times and spaces for what to do.

On the other hand, the question of what can an internally displaced, "uneducated", poor and informal Kurdish waste picker can do, apart from picking waste, holds a critique for the discourses that pin those people down only on a fixed identity, such as Kurd, poor, marginal, informal workers, waste pickers and so on. The one aim of this is to present those people doing things apart from the imposition of fixed and assigned identities. While waste pickers are contained in a specific form of process, for instance, the labor process, they express how they recognize the world with practices of intellectuality and aesthetics. They do things which are not attributed to them, contrary to what is stated by circulated discourses used for those people.

Doing artwork and writing with/around waste by the waste pickers is to criticize the constituted subject of writing and of art; the subject is supposed to know, supposed to see and supposed to aestheticize the life. The discursive construction of who has the ability to write, to think, to say, to see and who has the ability to do artwork is challenged by the practices of waste pickers in an informal space. But these abilities not only designate the capabilities of what a waste picker can do, but at the same time, they (to see, to think, to know, to write and do artwork) transform the existing space and construct a new living space. But how this new space emerges by

the intellectual and aesthetic production of waste pickers and how can this new space be described?

First, the language waste pickers use in their writings is neither Kurdish nor Turkish, but is a minor language (Kurdish) constructed in major language (Turkish). This language was not constructed in a closed pedagogical structure; the ability of it is to verbalize a new form of expression, form of telling and writing. Secondly, the writing of waste pickers reverses the given: modern state grammar, semiotics, and all rule, law, standard living procedures in the quotidian, the significance of space, the abstraction of city. This language of writing eliminates the existing form of dichotomies in life: mental and manual labor, working time and leisure time, ignorant and master. And it disconfigures all given structures and reconfigures new forms of senses and sensibilities.

Along with the same line, artwork and aesthetic practices of waste pickers also deterritorialize the given practices of art and the given subject of doing art. Further, aesthetic practices open a new field of space-and-experience, and new relationship in which waste pickers engage with space and with objects. When a waste object is used for the sake of art and aesthetics by the waste pickers in the informal space of Tarlabaşı, an impossible object –waste objects emerge. This impossible object is recognized as worthy not because it takes place in a marketing and capital process, but because it is used in the name of art and aesthetics. The emergence of the impossible object reveals an impossible experience outside of the capital process, outside modern state anticipations and outside the established social recognition. The impossible object creates a new space, a new time, new relationships, new experiences, and that new object is socially recognized and valuable.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ananya, Roy. "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning." 71.2 (2005).

Barthes, Roland. *The Rustle of Language*. New York: Hill and Vang, 1986.

Bayat, Asef. "Cairo's Poor Dilemmas of Survival and Solidarity." *Middle East Report* 1997: 2–12.

Bayat, Asef. "Globalization and the Politics of Informals in the Global South." Roy, Ananya and Nezar Alsayyad. *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*. Lanham, Boulder, New York & Oxford: Lexington Book, 2004.

—. "Islamism and Social Movement Theory." *Third World Quarterly* 2005: 891–908.

—. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. California: Standford University Press, 2010.

—. "Politics in the City–Inside–out." 24.2 (2012): 110–128.

—. *Street Politics: Poor Peoples Movements in Iran*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

—. "Un-civil Society: The Politics of the 'Informal People'." *Third World Quarterly* 18.1 (1997): 53–72.

Benjamin, Walter. "On Language as Such and the Language of Man." Demetz, P. *Reflections*. New York: Schocken, 1986.

Bensmaia, Reda. "Foreword: The Kafka Effect." Deleuze, Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London & New York: Routledge, 2010.

Brown, Bill. *Not Bored!: Anthology 1983-2010*. Cincinnati: Colossal Books, 2011.

Certeau, Michel de. *The Practices of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1984.

Copjec, Joan. *Imagine There's no Woman: Ethics and Sublimation*. Massachusetts & London: Th MIT Press, 2002.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

—. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London & New York: Continuum, 2004.

—. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Escobar, Arturo. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the third World*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Random House, 1995.

Foucault, Michel. "Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics." Dreyfus, H. and P. Rabinow. Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1983.

Foucault, Michel. "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress ." *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon House, 1984.

—. "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: an Interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984." *Philosophy Social Criticism* 12.112 (1987): 112–131.

—. *The History of Sexuality*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

—. "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry* 8.4 (1982): 777–795.

—. *The Use of Pleasure: the History of Sexuality, Volume Two*. New York: Pantheon Press, 1985.

Gibson-Graham, J.K. "The Violence of Development: Two Political Imaginaries." *Development* 47.1 (2004): 27–34.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Prison Notebooks*. New Yok: Columbia University Press, 1992.

Gregoriou, Zelia. "Commencing the Rhizome Towards a Minor Philosophy of Education." *Educational Philophy and Theory* 36.3 (2004): 233-251.

Lacan, Jacques. *The Ethics of Psychaonalysis*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Lefebvre, Henri. *Everyday Life in the modern World*. London: Continuum, 2002.

Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. *One Hundred Yeras of Slitude*. New York: Avon Books, 1971.

May, Todd. *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

May, todd. "Literature and Equality." *Philosophy Compass* 3.1 (2008).

May, Todd. "Rancière in South Carolina." Rockhill, Gabriel and Philip Watts. *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*. New York: Duke University Press, 2009. 105–120.

McNulty, Tracy. "Drmnding the Impossible: Desire and Social Change." *Feminist Cultural* 20.1 (2009).

Moser, Caroline. "The Informal Sector Debate, Part 1: 1970-1983." Rakowski, Cathy A. *Contrapunto: The Informal Sector Debate in Latin America*. Albany & New York: State University of New York Press, 1994. 11–29.

Portes, Alejandro, Manuels Castells and Benton A. Lauren. *The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

Rakowski, Cathy A. "The Informal Sector Debate, Part 2: 1984-1993." Rakowski, Cathy A. *Contrapunto: The Informal Sector Debate in Latin America*. Albany & New York: State University of New York Press, 1994. 31–50.

Rancière, Jacques. *On the Shores of Politics*. London: Verso, 1995.

Rancière, Jacques . "Dissenting Words: A Conversation with Jacques Rancière." 2.20 (200): 113–126.

Rancière, Jacques. "Aesthetics and Politics: Rethinking the Link." *Berkley Conference Paper*. Berkley, 2002.

—. *Disagreement*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

—. *Emancipated Spectator*. London & New York: Verso, 2009.

—. "The aesthetic Revolution and its Outcomes: Emplotments of Autonomy and Heteronomy." *New Left Review* 14 (1982): 113–151.

—. *The Philospher and His Poor*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003.

—. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. London: Continuum, 2004.

Scott, James. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Shoshana, Avi. "Minor Language and Major Responses in the Field of Popular Music in Israel." *Poetics* 41 (2013): 481–500.

Soto, Hernando de. *he Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World*. London: I.B. Taurus, 1989.

—. *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere else*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

The National Archives. n.d. 20 August 1014. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/politics/g3/>.

Zupancic, Alenka . *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two*. Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, 2003.