In Search of the Working Class:
Workers' Subjectivities and Resistance in an
Istanbul Neighborhood

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A dissertation presented to the

Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
at Boğaziçi University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2016

Approvals

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Abstract

"In Search of the Working Class: Workers' Subjectivities and Resistance in an Istanbul Neighborhood"

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This dissertation is an urban ethnography scrutinizing workers' subjectivities and resistance in a working class neighborhood of Istanbul, Turkey. By utilizing extensive case method, it aims to listen and shed light on the cultured agency of Turkish workers. It examines the apparent docility of working-class in our era of capitalist hegemony, particularly in Turkey as one of the extreme cases of this global tendency. It also contributes to the research on remedies for that docility.

By focusing on the sphere of work and drawing on an extensive field work, the research explores the issues of proletarianization, entrepreneurism, meanings of work, and compliance and resistance at work in a different light. It reveals that petty entrepreneurism is key to understand the hegemony of capitalism. It uncovers the variety of meanings that workers attribute to their work and detects four subjectivities that workers move among, namely the craftsman, the hard worker, the detached survivor, and the despiser.

The dissertation discovers several aspects of the subjectivity behind compliance and resistance, which remains to be hidden. I disclose five dilemmas of working-class resistance, namely the dilemma of dependency, of the craftsman, of coworkers, of the small workplace and of morality. Among others my primary contribution to the literature on working class resistance is to scrutinize the dilemmas, the hidden requirements, and the sacrifices working-class resistance involves. I argue that interests and their cognition cannot fully explain working-class resistance, but it requires a moral choice rather than merely a rational one.

135,000 words

Özet

"İşçi Sınıfını Ararken: Istanbul'un Bir Mahallesinde İşçi Öznellikleri ve Direniş"

Alpkan Birelma, Doktora Adayı, 2016
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Prof. Dr. Nadir Özbek, Tez Danışmanı

Bu tez İstanbul'daki bir işçi sınıfı mahallesinde yaşayan işçilerin öznelliklerini ve direnişlerini araştıran bir etnografidir. Genişletilmiş saha metodunu kullanan araştırma Türkiyeli işçilerin kültürel failliklerini dinlemeyi ve ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflemektedir. Kapitalizmin hegemonyasının son derece güçlü olduğu günümüzde işçi sınıfının görünürdeki uysallığını inceler. Bu küresel eğilimin daha da belirgin bir şekilde gözlemlendiği Türkiye'yi kendisine bağlam olarak seçer. Tez, bu uysallığın değişmesi için yapılan çalışmalara da katkı sunmayı amaçlar.

Kapsamlı bir saha araştırmasına dayanan ve çalışma hayatına odaklanan tez proleterleşme, girişimcilik, işin anlamı, çalışma hayatında itaat ve direniş meselelerini irdeler. Kapitalizmin işçi sınıfı üzerindeki hegemonyasını anlamak için küçük girişimciliğin kilit önemde olduğunu keşfeder. İşçilerin işlerine atfettikleri anlamların çeşitliliğini gösterir ve insanların aralarında dinamik bir şekilde hareket ettikleri dört farklı öznellik tespit eder. Bunları zanaatkar, çalışkan, idare eden ve nefret eden olarak isimlendirir.

Tez itaat ve direnişin arkasındaki öznelliğin gizli kalmış kimi veçhelerini açıklığa kavuşturur. İşçi sınıfı direnişinin beş ikilemini tanımlar. Bunlar bağımlılık ikilemi, zanaatkarın ikilemi, iş arkadaşları ikilemi, küçük işyerinin ikilemi ve ahlak ikilemidir. Tezin işçi sınıfı direnişi literatürüne katkısı direnişin ikilemlerini, gizli koşullarını ve gerektirdiği bedelleri ortaya çıkarmasıdır. Çıkarların ve bu çıkarların idrakinin işçi sınıfı direnişini açıklayamadığını, direnişin sadece rasyonel bir tercih olmayıp ahlaki bir tercihi de gerektirdiğini savunur.

135.000 kelime

viii

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To Mehmet Ali and Emin

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

1

Introduction

This dissertation is an urban ethnography scrutinizing workers' subjectivities in a working-class neighborhood of Istanbul, Turkey. My intent is to "listen" and shed light on the cultured agency of Turkish workers in the vein of the work of E. P. Thompson. I examine the apparent docility of the working class on our era of capitalist hegemony, particularly in Turkey as one of the extreme cases of this global tendency. I also intend to contribute to research on remedies for such docility.

After years of activism within and research on working class communities and local labor struggles, I came to terms with a large gap between my theoretical assumptions and the life as lived in these communities. As Dirlik once stated, those who strive for social justice "must be listening all the time and must not impose their abstractions upon" the struggle. Political intervention must be defined in terms of the dialectic between "critical consciousness" and "the consciousness of the social present," if we want to be effective and "issue in a new culture of liberation."[1] We must carefully listen to and observe the injuries, experiences, needs, desires, struggles, values, and attitudes of the members of the working class to examine how class harms them, what they want, and how they act in the face of those harms. It is necessary to adjust for

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[1] Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 44.

the wide gap between the subjectivity of the workers and the advocates of labor: unionists, critical academia, political activists, and "the Left" in general. This will contribute not only to an understanding of how class works, but also how the everyday struggles of workers against the class system may be supported. As Burawoy notes - using Bauman's terms - by "mediating between communities"[2] and "by linking divergent struggles across uneven geographical and political terrains," engaged sociologist can play an important role in supporting labor "not as an omniscient legislator but as a sensitive interpreter."[3] The political aim of this dissertation is to mediate between communities of workers and intellectuals; the former has always needed and will always need the support of the latter to augment their struggle for justice.

When looked at from below by Turkish workers, the hegemonic grasp of capitalism seems to arise greatly from the realm of the economy itself thanks to scarce but crucial opportunities for upward mobility and economic growth. We do not have to move away from the sphere of production to explain the hegemony of capitalism; capitalist hegemony is neither fragile nor transparent in this sphere. This does not mean that spheres such as politics, education, religion, or leisure are unimportant for the manufacture of consent, but their relative shares in the process are minor compared to the sphere of production, where most of the task is accomplished under conditions of free market capitalism unhindered by an economic crisis. Following this assumption, this research focuses on and deepens our knowledge of the sphere of work, leaving out other aspects of working class life for the present.

The robustness of capitalism to build its hegemony in the very sphere where exploitation occurs implies that structurally, capitalism has the advantage of constraining resistance. This structural advantage means that resistance under capitalism is even more subjective than assumed. My primary contribution to the literature on working class resistance is to uncover this complex area of subjectivity: the hidden predicaments, requirements, and sacrifices that resistance involves, and how much more morally demanding it is than generally assumed.

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2 Michael Burawoy, "The Extended Case Method," *Sociological theory* 16, no. 1 (1998): 13.

3 "The Public Turn from Labor Process to Labor Movement," *Work and Occupations* 35, no. 4 (2008): 384.

§ 1.1 The Concepts of Working Class and Subjectivity

Somers states that concepts are "marked indelibly (although often obscurely) with the signature of time, normativity, and institution building."[4] They not only represent social reality, but also influence the practices and subjectivities they claim to represent. There is a "feedback effect" between representations and practices; the two interact spontaneously and continuously. As Hacking argues: "People act and decide under descriptions, and as new possibilities for description emerge, so do new kinds of action."[5] Or as Fraser and Gordon succinctly remark, "A crucial element of politics … [is] … the struggle to define social reality."[6] The production and consumption of the "working class" as a concept are not exempt from these implications.

From a subjectivist point of view, the working class is nothing but an ethical-political project. In this sense, even Thompson's brilliant and inspiring history of the English working class "ends up essentializing it."[7] Contrary to Thompson's concept of experience, which "essentializes identity and reifies the subject," Scott insists "on the discursive nature of experience and on the politics of its construction." This is because "experience is always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted."[8] Similarly, Eley and Nield reject the "commonality or universality of class experience in the Thompsonian notation," and replace it with "contingent discursive constructions."[9] This means, "the expectation of class consciousness as a recurrent figuration ceases to be available."[10] The assumption that workers tend to struggle and unite against their exploitation and oppression in the absence of external

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4 Margaret R. Somers, *Genealogies of Citizenship: Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 173.

5 Ian Hacking, "The Making and Molding of Child Abuse," *Critical inquiry* 17, no. 2 (1991): 254-55.

6 Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the Us Welfare State," *Signs* 19, no. 2 (1994): 310.

7 Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 786.

8 Ibid., 797.

9 Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, *The Future of Class in History: What's Left of the Social?* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 194.

10 Ibid., 195.

impediments is incorrect. Working class struggle, especially in its collective forms, has always been a [not necessarily articulated] ethical-political project carried out by some workers, as well as intellectuals, and activists from various classes.

From an objectivist point of view, classes, or to be more analytic, "class locations within class relations," as formulated by Wright are based on empirical facts about structured patterns of human interaction: on "the rights and powers people have over productive resources."[11] However, specifying class locations, not to speak of classes, is very complex. The number of classes or class locations is a question with no absolute answer; there are as many classes "as it proves empirically useful to distinguish for the analytical purposes at hand."[12] This means that for certain analytical purposes in a high level of abstraction, one can even propose a simple scheme comprised of just two classes.

A Marxian version of class analysis – upon which my argument generally rests, though it stretches in many directions – distinguishes itself from other class analyses by underscoring that inequalities in the right to and power over productive resources generate inequalities in income "through the ways in which exploiters, by virtue of their exclusionary rights and powers over resources, are able to appropriate surplus generated by the effort of the exploited."[13] Contrary to many Marxists who insist on the pure scientific, objective nature of this analysis, Wright admits that it is actually rooted in "a set of moral commitments to a form of radical egalitarianism."[14] He states that "Marxists have generally been reluctant to systematically argue for these moral commitments,"[15] but the reality is that Marxists have generally deliberately disguised these moral commitments to endow their analysis with pure scientific objectivity.

Wright does not scrutinize the implications of his own acknowledgement. I believe the key concept, that conceals the moral-political nature of Marxian

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11   Erik Olin Wright, "Foundations of a Neo-Marxist Class Analysis," in *Approaches to Class Analyses*, ed. Erik Olin Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 14.

12   As Wright quotes form Erickson and Goldthorpe, See ibid., 19.

13   Ibid., 24.

14   Ibid., 6.

15   Ibid.

analysis is class interest. A magical concept that creates commonality among workers, it recalls the role that experience played in the accounts of labor history discussed above. Wright directly defines all of the core concepts of Marxist analysis – namely class consciousness, class practices, class formations, class struggle –by using the concept of class interest: "Class consciousness is the subjective awareness people have of their class interests and the conditions for advancing them."[16] To make a long story short, for such a crucial concept in Marxian analysis, Marxists apply a surprisingly simplistic, overly abstracted and one-dimensional definition of class interest. A thorough deconstruction of Marxian notion of working class interest, which hides numerous assumptions in guise of scientific objectivity, is needed. Wright defines class interests as "the material interests of people derived from their location-within-class-relations,"[17] because, he argues, "the opportunities and trade-offs people face in pursuing these interests are structured by their class locations."[18]

Vertically, in terms of their location-within-class-relations, workers have indeed contradictory interests with their employers due to their exploitation and domination by the latter. But this contradiction is bounded. There is also a common interest between the two: if workers struggle for and manage to get higher and higher wages, at some point the firm will be bankrupted harming both workers and the employer.[19] No less than the contradictory ones, the common interests derives also from workers' location-within-class-relations. One can argue that a revolution that will abolish private property and bring about worker self-management, is the level of abstraction where the antagonistic nature of the contradiction is most obvious. However, such a new social configuration – with which I have also some sympathy – is far from objective. Rather it derives from human preferences and convictions that are subjective, moral, and political in nature.

Horizontally, workers are not exempt from contradictions of interests amongst themselves. Indeed, due to their locations-within-class-relations,

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16   Ibid., 21.
17   Ibid., 20.
18   Ibid., 21.
19   This commonality of interests functions not only at the firm level but also at the macroeconomic level. See Chapter 5.

workers are also in competition with one another – to a certain extent – to avoid unemployment and acquire better jobs and positions within the labor market. Contradiction of interest between an individual worker and her employer neither guarantees nor in itself requires the construction of common interests among the workers unless there are also moral and/or political intentions at play. For the construction of solidarity, workers must intentionally suspend the conflicting interests amongst themselves with respect to the labor market and build solidarity with a sense of moral-political cause, as well as a certain level of altruism fed by that cause. Wright acknowledges the problematic personification or massification of the working class as if it is an individual. In a footnote, he remarks, "I do not believe that classes as collective entities have interests in a literal sense."[20] Nevertheless, in a later article he returns to his original "common interest" definition.[21] I will scrutinize and elaborate on this important theoretical issue throughout this dissertation, but especially in the fifth and sixth chapters.

As to the concept of subjectivity, I should refer to anthropologists. The notion of agency, brought to the forefront by Thompson in the debates of class, always "presupposes a complex subjectivity behind it."[22] Ortner argues for "the importance of a robust anthropology of subjectivity."[23] Agency is "not some natural or originally will" as she remarks, but it "takes shape as specific desires and intentions within a matrix of subjectivity – of (culturally constituted) feelings, thoughts, and meaning."[24] Subjectivity can be defined as "the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear that animate acting subjects." Moreover, it always implies "the cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought, and

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20   Erik Olin Wright, "Working-Class Power, Capitalist-Class Interests, and Class Compromise," *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 4 (2000): 962.

21   "Foundations of a Neo-Marxist Class Analysis." On the other hand, Wright in his latest book, again questions the vertically contradictory nature of working class interests with the bourgeoisie. See *Envisioning Real Utopias* (London: Verso, 2010), 311-20.

22   Sherry Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory* (London: Duke University Press, 2006), 127.

23   Ibid.

24   Ibid., 110.

so on."[25] Subjectivities are both "the states of mind of real actors embedded in the social world" and "the cultural formations that (at least partially) express, shape, and constitute those states of mind."[26] It is crucial to underscore that subjectivity also includes "unconscious dynamics" as "in a Freudian unconscious or a Bourdieusian habitus."[27]

Lee underlines that worker subjectivity is not reducible to material interests, and indeed "workers' sense of dignity, justice, and their need for recognition" are equally important.[28] She points out that the subject is important because it is the link between social structure and social practice, and she defines subjectivity by quoting Brubaker and Cooper:

> One's sense of who one is, of one's social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act. As a dispositional term, it belongs to the realm of what Pierre Bourdieu has called *sens pratique,* the practical sense—at once cognitive and emotional—that persons have of themselves and their social world.[29]

Subjectivity serves as "the basis of agency," which is "a necessary part of understanding how people (try to) act on the world even as they are acted upon."[30] Agency is not a simple phenomenon either, but has two fields of meanings, as Ortner brilliantly articulates. First, as widely recognized, agency concerns "acting within relations of social inequality, asymmetry, and force."[31] However, it has a second, less recognized meaning concerning "intentionality and the pursuit of (culturally defined) projects." Crucially, agency is never merely one or the other. "Its two faces – as (the pursuit of) projects or as (the exercise of or against) power" are destined to be intertwined.[32] The importance

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25   Ibid., 107.

26   Ibid., 128.

27   Ibid., 111.

28   Ching Kwan Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 15.

29   Ibid., 114.

30   Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory*, 110.

31   Ibid., 139.

32   Ibid.

of these two faces will be understood in my discussion on resistance in the following chapters.

§ 1.2   Methodology and Research Design

In my analysis of working class subjectivities and agency, I employ the extended case method articulated by Burawoy. This method relies on a reflexive model of science that "embraces not detachment but engagement as the road to knowledge."[33] In addition to dialogue among observer and participants, reflexive science builds on a "second dialogue between local processes and extralocal forces," which is followed by a third: "dialogue of theory with itself."[34] In short, it is "an ethnography that forges micro-macro connections through the reconstruction of social theory."[35]

The extended case method extends the observer into a participant with the notion that "intervention is not only an unavoidable part of social research but a virtue to be exploited."[36] As a concise summary of my presence and findings on certain occasions in this field research (especially in the sixth chapter), Burawoy notes that "the activist who seeks to transform the world can learn much from its obduracy."[37] The second extension implies "moving with the participants through their space and time."[38] I followed the same people, some for many years, through their homes, streets, coffeehouses, workplaces, village, unions, and their own shops witnessing how they act differently on different occasions and at different times.

The third extension is from the everyday world to its structuration, which delineates the social forces behind observable social processes,[39] which is to

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33   Burawoy, "The Extended Case Method," 5.

34   Ibid.

35   *The Extended Case Method: Four Countries, Four Decades, Four Great Transformations, and One Theoretical Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), xii.

36   "The Extended Case Method," 14.

37   Ibid., 17.

38   Ibid., 14.

39   Ibid., 15.

say, "the extension from microprocesses to macroforces."[40] Although I examine mostly individual stories and subjectivities within settings of small group interactions at a micro level, I never lose insight of the impact of structural forces on those subjectivities and interactions, as well as their reflexive contribution to structuration. The last extension proposed is that of theory. Connecting folk and academic theory, the extended case method aims to deepen theory not by confirming but by refuting one's favorite theory.[41] In my investigations on entrepreneurism, the meaning of work, and working class resistance in ensuing chapters, I propose significant theoretical revisions to the set of theories on which I build on.

Burawoy turns what Dirlik has defined as the dialectic between "critical consciousness" and "the consciousness of the social present"[42] into a methodological possibility, albeit a difficult one. As defined by Burawoy below, I take on this task to revise the social theory on several occasions in this dissertation:

> Social science and common sense are not insulated and incommensurable. In other words, it is possible, but not always easy, to forge a passage from common sense to social science, and it is possible that one can elaborate a good sense within the common sense. Indeed, that is the task of the public ethnographer.[43]

On the other hand, though I especially considered these methodological concerns at the beginning of my field research, I sometimes felt like Schepher-Hughes who noted that she "simply followed the women and men of the alto in their everyday struggle to survive."[44] As she acknowledges, "writing culture" is "always a highly subjective, partial and fragmentary – but also deeply felt and personal – record of human lives based on eyewitness and testimony."[45]

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40 *The Extended Case Method: Four Countries, Four Decades, Four Great Transformations, and One Theoretical Tradition*, xv.

41 "The Extended Case Method," 16.

42 Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*, 44.

43 Burawoy, *The Extended Case Method: Four Countries, Four Decades, Four Great Transformations, and One Theoretical Tradition*, xiv.

44 Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 19.

45 Ibid., xii.

Similarly, in my daily practice as a field researcher, Portelli's less ambitious but tangible warnings have always guided me:

> [T]he field situation is a dialogue, in which we are talking to people, not studying 'sources'; and that it is largely a learning situation in which the narrator has information which we lack… There is a lot more to be learned by leaving ourselves open to the unexpected than by repetition of our own conceptualizations… The narrators' sense that I was not studying them but learning from them projected a degree of confidence, which ultimately also helped further my own agenda… Oral history begins with … two persons meeting on a ground of equality to bring together their different types of knowledge and achieve a new synthesis from which both will be changed.[46]

I designed this research as an urban ethnography in a working-class neighborhood of Istanbul. My ethnographic interest in this neighborhood stretches back to 2007, when I investigated a local labor struggle: a mobilization aimed at the unionization of a factory adjacent to the neighborhood. This was one of three mobilizations I studied in the course of preparing an M.A. thesis and in the process I met and befriended many factory workers living in this neighborhood.[47] After engaging in and studying labor movements both before and during my graduate years and before, I felt the necessity to look beyond this tip of the iceberg, namely at everyday life, at the "non-movement."[48] The intention was to make sense of this vast area of life itself, but also to better understand the labor movements and mobilizations, their deficiencies, and their hardships.

Besides visits before and after the bulk of my research, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork, renting flats and living in the neighborhood in two different

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46 Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany: State Universtiy of New York Press, 1991), x-xii.

47 See Alpkan Birelma, *Ekmek Ve Haysiyet Mücadelesi - Günümüz Türkiyesi'nde Üç Işç Hareketinin Etnografisi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), 81-152.

48 Asef Bayat, "From 'Dangerous Classes' to 'Quiet Rebels': Politics of the Urban Subaltern in the Global South," *International Sociology* 15, no. 3 (2000): 553.

apartments for 20 months in 2010 and 2011. I continued my fieldwork, although in a less intense way through the present, by investigating an ongoing, collective mobilization that involves a group of workers living in the neighborhood.

After my initial investigations in the field and due to my focus on culture and subjectivity, I decided to home in on a particular ethno-cultural community, following the lead of many qualitative studies in the field.[49] If I had not made this decision, my research would have ended up being a comparison of the subjectivities of different ethno-cultural groups, like Lamont's.[50] Although this kind of a comparison would be interesting, the very nature of comparison would push me to make sweeping generalizations about each community and underscore the distinctions among rather than variation within the communities. Since my initial concern was getting as deep as possible into workers' subjectivities, I preferred a non-comparative method. I chose to study the Turkish-Sunni community instead of two other discernable communities, namely the Alevi (a minority Muslim sect with a semi-ethnic nature) and

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49   As well known, Thompson neglects the histories of Scottish and Welsh workers "not out of chauvinism, but out of respect. It is because class is a cultural as much as an economic formation that I have been cautious as to generalizing beyond English experience." See Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1963), 13. Willis examines neither other ethnicities (other than the English) nor females "for the sake of clarity and incision, and in no way implying their lack of importance." See Paul E. Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981 [1977]), 2. Liebow's much quoted work restricts itself to African-American male member of the working class. See Elliot Liebow, *Tally's Corner, a Study of Negro Streercorner* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967). Skeggs examines only white working-class women. See Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class & Gender: Becoming Respectable* (London: Sage, 1997). Kefalas scrutinizes only the whites in a working-class neighborhood. Maria Kefalas, *Working-Class Heroes: Protecting Home, Community, and Nation in a Chicago Neighborhood* (Univ of California Press, 2003). Lubeck's study covers only Hausa-speaking Muslim workers in a Nigerian town. See Paul M. Lubeck, *Islam and Urban Labor in Northern Nigeria: The Making of a Muslim Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

50   Michèle Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Kurdish communities, both of which are minorities subjected to systemic discrimination by the Turkish state. By Turkish-Sunni I mean those who claim Turkish ethnicity and Sunni Islam as a religion, which is the predominant sect among Muslims both in the world and in Turkey. Not surprisingly, Turkish-Sunni as an identity or community is contingent and floating as always. However, it has a historical durability[51] and has been reinforced by the synthesis of Turkism and Sunni Islamism of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), the hegemonic, governing party since 2002.[52]

Alevis constitute nearly 15 percent of Turkey's population and they follow "a syncretistic belief combining elements of Shiite Islam, Bektaşi Sufism, and Turkish shamanism."[53] Being an Alevi is not only a religious identity, but has semi-ethnic connotations, since it is "a status acquired by birth."[54] On the other hand, Alevi identity "cross-cuts Kurdish and Turkish ethnic designations."[55] For centuries, Alevis were discriminated against by the Ottoman Empire, affiliated with Sunni Islam.[56] In the last century there were also many cases of persecution executed or provoked by the Turkish Republic against them. Alevis tend to be left-leaning and support secularist parties due to the threat they feel from the Sunni majority.[57] They were a stronghold of the socialist left in the 1970s, and are the main community where the marginalized

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51 See for example Alan Dubetsky, "Class and Community in Urban Turkey," *Commoners, Climbers and Notables: A Sampler of Studies on Social Ranking in the Middle East* 21 (1977): 362; Sema Erder, *Kentsel Gerilim: Enformel İlişki Ağları Araştırması* (Ankara: Um:Ag, 1997), 131-41.

52 Cihan Tugal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

53 Ahmet Yükleyen, "Sufism and Islamic Groups in Contemporary Turkey," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Resat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 387.

54 Ibid.

55 Jenny B White, "Islam and Politics in Contemporary Turkey," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 359.

56 Ibid., 376.

57 Ibid., 376-77; Yükleyen, "Sufism and Islamic Groups in Contemporary Turkey," 387; Ali Çarkoğlu and Binnaz Toprak, *Religion, Society and Politics in a Changing Turkey* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2007), 14; Harald Schüler, *Türkiye'de Sosyal Demokrasi: Particilik, Hemşehrilik, Alevilik* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1999).

socialist left can still find working-class recruits. Social and political tensions between Alevis and Sunnis have been increasing due to the AKP government's pro-Sunni policies.[58]

Kurds, on the other hand, constitute around 15 to 20 percent of Turkey's population.[59] The disavowal of Kurds in state policy and ensueing revolts and warfare have resulted in Kurdish provinces remaining "under-under-developed,"[60] as the social exclusion and discrimination of Kurds have become institutionalized.[61] A quantitative research on the working conditions of Kurds shows that in 2003, while only 38 percent of Kurds worked as regular employees, the ratio was 57 percent for ethnic Turks.[62] Casual employees, on the other hand, comprised 15 percent of the Kurdish working population, while the ratio fell to just 6 percent for Turks.[63] Among the urban working population, 57 percent of Kurds worked in a regular workplace, while the ratio was 80 percent for Turks.[64] There are many signs that Kurds are over-represented in precarious jobs, such as those in the shipbuilding sector,[65] or among seasonal, agricultural migrant workers.[66] The support of Kurds for the left-leaning Kurdish

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58   Çarkoğlu and Toprak, *Religion, Society and Politics in a Changing Turkey*, 14, 31, 57.

59   Hamit Bozarslan, "Kurds and the Turkish State," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Resat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 334.

60   Ibid., 335.

61   For a recent account see Zeynep Gambetti and Joost Jongerden, *The Kurdish Issue in Turkey: A Spatial Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

62   Seyfettin Gürsel, Gökçe Uysal-Kolaşin, and Onur Altındağ, "Anadil Ayrımında Işgüc Piyasası Konumları," (Istanbul: BETAM, 2009).

63   Ibid.

64   Ibid.

65   Nevra Akdemir and Aslı Odman, "Tuzla Tersaneler Bölgesi'nde Örülen Ve Üstü Örtülen Sınıfsallıklar," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 113 (2008).

66   Sidar Çınar, *Öteki Proletarya: De-Proletarizasyon Ve Mevsimlik Tarım Işçiler* (Ankara: Nota Bene Yayınları, 2014); Deniz Duruiz, "Embodiment of Space and Labor: Kurdish Migrant Workers in Turkish Agriculture," in *The Kurdish Issue in Turkey: A Spatial Perspective*, ed. Zeynep Gambetti and Joost Jongerden (New York: Routledge, 2015).

national movement has been steadily growing, particularly in the last decade.[67]

In this context, two interrelated reasons informed my preference for studying the Turkish-Sunni community. First, similar to whites in the United States, Turkish-Sunnis constitute the majority of the population of Turkey. As Lamont notes the white working class is "the backbone of American society"[68] in the sense that they "exercise an especially strong influence on social and political change" in the country. Lamont underlines that this fact by itself makes it crucial to listen their voices.[69] It would not lead to much disaggrement to claim that the parallel argument is valid for Turkish-Sunni working class of Turkey. The second reason is the greater distance of critical academia from this particular and largest section of working class of Turkey. With its typically higher level of conservatism and docility compared to Alevi and Kurdish counterparts, the Turkish-Sunni working class is arguably the part of their class most culturally distant from critical academics.

A last note concerns the gender barrier. Although I could not generally get as close with women as with men, I still had the chance to interact regularly or make at least an interview with twenty-one women. Including part-time work, eight of them were workers at some point during my fieldwork. One was an employer and the others were housewives. Except the employer, a community activist, and an Alevi woman, I interacted with women in the presence of male relatives, which is a great hindarence for an investigation on subjectivities. I spent time with women mostly in their homes together with their husbands, fathers, or brothers. Nevertheless, compared to some other studies such as Tugal`s study[70] on an Islamic community, I interacted with a relatively

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67   Bozarslan, "Kurds and the Turkish State."; Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The Pkk and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York: NYU Press, 2007); Cuma Çiçek, *Ulus, Din, Sınıf: Türkiye'de Kürt Mutabakatının İnşas* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2015).

68   Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*, 2.

69   Ibid.

70   Cihan Tugal, "Islamism among the Urban Poor in Turkey: Religion, Space, and Class in Everyday Political Interaction" (The University of Michigan, 2003), 102-04.

higher number of women. This is due to relatively low gender segregation in the neighborhood.

In her ethnography on working class women in Istanbul, White ranks the working class in terms of piousness into three groups: the less religious who do not pray regularly, the religious who pray regularly and impose certain restrictions on women, and lastly, conservative religious families who most likely have a contact with a *tarikat* and impose strict seclusion of women.[71] Only a few of the families I came across in İkitelli fit into White's last group, while most were like White's second classification. Nevertheless, because the intimacy and length of my interactions with women were limited, I could only include their subjectivities and agency into the discussion in a moderate way.

§ 1.3   Outline of Chapters

In the next chapter, I introduce the neighborhood and a working class couple among its residents. The chapter presents some general observations about the subjective experience of wage work and explores two aspects of working class lives beyond wage work, namely, proletarianization and entrepreneurism. In the abstract sense, wage work temporally lies between the two: the former marks the entry, the latter represents the exit. I explore both phenomena with an international comparative view and provide a nuanced assessment of the much emphasized semi-proletarianization of Turkish workers. The prevalence and subjective impacts of entrepreneurship among the working class is an often ignored topic, though, as I will suggest it is a crucial – arguably the most crucial – factor for understanding working class consent to capitalism. Entrepreneurism is more prevalent among the working class than assumed. It actually serves as the upward mobility of a lucky few, inflicting hidden injuries on the rest by implanting self-accusations.

In the third chapter, I plunge into the meanings that workers of İkitelli attribute to work in general and their immediate jobs in particular. My goal is to provide a well-deserved, broad consideration of the work experience without reducing it to class struggle. Although class struggle inevitably leaves its

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71   Jenny Barbara White, *Money Makes Us Relatives: Women's Labor in Urban Turkey* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 34.

mark on all of the meanings attached to work, the latter is more significant than merely being the principal arena of class struggle. I operationalize the question of the meaning of work as a means to examine workers' experiences at work beyond an axis of resistance-compliance, which consumes the attention of critical researchers. I explore not only general trends but also variations, which the critical literature on workers' subjectivities mostly overlook with generalize in broad strokes as the "alienated worker destined to be meaninglessness," the "hard-working meaning seeker," the "attached worker destined to be docile," or "neoliberalized" worker as I will uncover. I explore the meanings İkitelli workers attach to their work under four distinct subjectivities.

The forth chapter introduces the main problem, namely working-class resistance and compliance, with a particular focus on how the latter leaves its mark on former. Since class struggle is relational, I begin the chapter with an examination of employers' struggle to break workers' resistance and make them compliant. To paint the general picture, I present several, revealing, everyday interactions of workers with respect to resistance. On this backdrop I examine four compliant workers and also discuss how others perceive compliance. Analysis of worker resistance is dominated mostly by labor movement approach nowadays, which is biased by a version of romanticism due to its focus on already emerged cases of resistance in its most advanced form. Without thoroughly exploring compliance, as I do in this chapter, one cannot understand why resisters mostly fail, why many resisters renounce collective methods, or why they seem to not be trying hard enough.

The examination of resistance per se starts in the fifth chapter, where I scrutinize the possibilities and limits of resistance, citing concrete cases and the dilemmas faced in each case. Given that resistance is but one specific option for improving one's conditions, the chapter introduces four other strategies, all of which involve some level of agency. As for resistance, I relate the stories of five resistant workers. I operationalize their stories to uncover the actual forms of resistance, but more importantly to explore the dilemmas of working class resistance. I interpret each case as an example of a different dilemma, which broadens our understanding of resistance by revealing the somewhat hidden predicaments and requirements involved. These dilemmas restrict acts of resistance – to use Bourdieu's words – "almost automatically"

even without deliberate intervention by those in power. Some familiar, some unrecognized, these dilemmas explain why it is very difficult for workers to expand and advance resistance, and why resistance strongly tends to be moderate and isolated. These dilemmas disclose why working class resistance is neither natural nor obvious, but destined to be subjective in the sense of requiring a greater level of agency, effort, and sacrifice than assumed.

There are two streams in the literature on working-class resistance: the first is comprised of often local studies of working class life, which are uncompromisingly pessimistic about resistance in the age of neoliberalism. The labor movement literature, on the other hand, is mostly biased by romanticism. While the first stream scrutinizes the ordinary state of working-class subjectivity, the second concentrates on an extraordinary state, namely, particular subjectivities that may emerge during working class mobilizations. While the forth and fifth chapters lean toward the first genre, the sixth one is an exercise of the second stream. However, I propose the groundwork for a much needed dialogue between the two genres.

In the sixth chapter I explore open, collective working-class resistance by focusing on an interesting and long-lasting case I observed from its inception in 2009 through the present. In these years, I observed the ups and downs of the mobilization, which involved unexpected twists and developments. I witnessed both mobilization and demobilization, resistance and compliance, and revolutionizing and regressing of subjectivities. The case reveals the extraordinary and the ordinary together, and the ongoing oscillations in between.

Many workers turned into activists during these years, but few kept on against all odds; many gave up or lost their passion due to different reasons. Some of the leaders of the mobilization unexpectedly turned into de-mobilizers, thanks to the intervention of bureaucratic and corrupt union leadership. Mobilizations have the potential to change and transform its participants to embrace activist and critical subjectivities. They are indeed the most crucial means to change working-class subjectivities, but whether, how, and to what extent the transformations can survive after the peaks of collective action are important questions. We know little about this enigmatic subject, which I explore in the final chapter.

I also explore how the particular dilemmas examined in the fifth chapter are experienced in collective action. This inquiry serves the dialogue I propose

between the two aforementioned genres. In the extraordinary milieu of collective action, workers experience these dilemmas in different and more complex ways. Utilizing the opportunities of this complex milieu, I elaborate on the dilemma of morality as I call it: resistance mostly leads to the initial deterioration of one's conditions, before the mere possibility of leading to uncertain improvments. This means that resistance requires not only a rational and/or critical inquiry, but also a specific, accompanying moral persuasion.

2

The Neighborhood and Its Residents

This study focuses on workers living in a residential region composed of two administrative neighborhoods called Mehmet Akif and Atatürk. Both neighborhoods are in Küçükçekmece borough of northwest Istanbul. The colloquial designation for the larger region, which includes these two neighborhoods and a third to the north is İkitelli.

I first came to İkitelli in 2003 to visit a newly founded experimental union that was trying to organize subcontracted workers of the public postal service company, PTT, in Bahçelievler. The union was founded by a small, socialist fraction active in İkitelli's Atatürk neighborhood. Atatürk neighborhood hosted many socialist groups at the time as was instantly observable by perva-size, revolutionary street graffiti. I would later recognize that this was because of a large Alevi community in Atatürk neighborhood. Another thing that struck me was the nearly twenty *pavyon*s – night clubs with escorts – on the main street of the neighborhood. I participated in some activities of this union for less than six months, but later lost touch with them.

Two reasons compelled me to visit the neighborhood again in 2007. First was a group of young, Kurdish, migrant workers with whom I became friends and who had come to the neighborhood to work. The second reason was a unionization struggle I chose to study for my master's thesis that was taking place near to the neighborhood. Many workers in that struggle were living in İkitelli and I became close with a group of friends who will frequently appear

in this dissertation. Meanwhile, I coincidentally became friends with a socialist, Alevi worker who happened to live in İkitelli, and who would be among the protagonists of the story I present in the final chapter. In 2010 I decided to do my fieldwork in the neighborhood and move into an apartment there. For nearly two years, it became my home.

§ 2.1 The Neighborhood

To set the scene for this section, I will briefly introduce the neighborhood and its history. İkitelli consists of three administrative neighborhoods named after prominent figures in Turkish political history, Atatürk, Mehmet Akif, and Ziya Gökalp. Since the beginning of the construction of the Trans European Motorway (TEM) in 1985, the Mehmet Akif and Atatürk neighborhoods have been separated from Ziya Gökalp. Much later, in 2008, the latter became a part of the Başakşehir borough in a major reorganization of Istanbul's borough boundaries, while the other two remained in Küçükçekmece. I conducted my research mainly in the Atatürk and Mehmet Akif neighborhoods, which actually comprise a single residential neighborhood.

Mehmet Akif lies at the northeastern corner of Küçükçekmece, while Atatürk is situated next to it surrounding it on east and south. The two neighborhoods have no natural boundary between them other than a small creek. On the other hand, considered as a region, they have very distinct boundaries from surrounding areas. On the north is the TEM and beyond that the İkitelli Organized Industrial Zone comprising a vast area of nearly 7 square kilometers. To the east is a major highway, the Yeşilköy-Mahmutbey Bağlantı Yolu (known as Basın Ekspres Yolu), which connects the Northern with the Southern Motorway (the D-100). This highway is the boundary separating the neighborhood from the adjacent borough of Bağcılar. On the west and south, the region is surrounded by the Halkalı Mass Housing area, a middle-income residential project built at the beginning of the 1990s. The administrative neighborhood of this mass housing project is officially named Atakent with a clear reference to Ataköy, an upper-middle-class neighborhood to the south

on the D-100 (E-5) motorway.[1] On one of Murat Güvenç's maps, he distinguishes among nine educational levels of the residents of Istanbul neighborhoods according to 2008 data.[2] The data reveals a significant gap between İkitelli's Mehmet Akif and Atatürk neighborhoods vis-a-vis Atakent. While the former are at the lowest education level, the latter is at the second highest.[3]

Map 2.1 Küçükçekmece Borough and Atatürk & Mehmet Akif Neighborhoods

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1 For an important observation about class, income and cultural differences to the south and north of the D-100 motorway, see Erder, *Kentsel Gerilim: Enformel Ilişki Ağları Araştırması*, 73-83.

2 "Istanbul 2008 Mahalleleri Eğitim Profilleri," Murat Güvenç, accessed December 20, 2015, http://istifhanem.com/2012/06/09/muratguvenc-Istanbul3/.

3 For the correlation between education and class, see Oğuz Işık and M. Melih Pınarcıoğlu, "Segregation in İstanbu: Patterns and Processes," *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 100, no. 4 (2009): 473.

Map 2.2 Atatürk & Mehmet Akif Neighborhoods: A Detail View

2.1.1 *History of the Neighborhood*

İkitelli is originally the name of a historical Ottoman village situated in the area of Ziya Gökalp, and the name derives from the tomb of the dervish İki Telli Baba, which is located in this older part of the region. Because of this historical legacy, the Ziya Gökalp neighborhood is still called *Köyiçi*, that is "the center of the village" by locals. Historically, the area of all three neighborhoods and adjacent lands used to be referred to as İkitelli village, which was administratively a part of Halkalı *bucak* on South. Until the end of the 1970s the Mehmet Akif and Atatürk neighborhoods were pastures and arable fields. While a smaller share of this area was owned by a local farmer, Ahmet Özkan, the far larger share was owned by Nail Akar, a man whose family immigrated from the Balkans at the beginning of the twentieth century. Nail Akar and his two sons undertook the parceling of the area in 1974 and sales of the lands followed that. Nail Akar's older son, Mustafa Akar has a reputation as an honest tradesman. Specifically, people give him and his brother credit for hiring a topographical engineer which resulted in extremely straight, professional parceling of the plots of land, a feature almost unseen in working-class neighborhoods of Istanbul. At the widest point from east to west, a street of more than

1.5 kilometers runs straight through the region crossing the two neighborhoods.

Migration to the region began in the middle of the 1970s and two tiny, separate neighborhoods emerged soon after. One of them lay to the east, near the river through which the Basın Ekspres highway now runs. The other was located near a creek running almost one kilometer away to the west, which now serves as the border between Atatürk and Mehmet Akif. While the newly emerging neighborhood to the east was built by Sünni families from the Black Sea region, mainly originating from Giresun and Ordu, the one to the west was established by Alevi families from Tokat. The first mosque in the neighborhood built near the creek in 1976 still stands after multiple renovations. The influx of Black Sea families to the neighborhood came from the Zeytinburnu region of Istanbul accelerating at the end of the 1970s.[4] Indeed, Mustafa and Recep Akar, sons of the primary landholder, had two real estate offices: one in İkitelli and the other in Zeytinburnu. The main reason for the migration to the area was the supply of cheap land being offered to working-class people who were mostly tenants in Zeytinburnu. However, another reason mentioned by many older locals was the desire to escape political violence in Zeytinburnu, which was a stronghold of working-class radicalism in Istanbul during the 1970s. Most of those who came at the end of the 1970s and onwards become workers in the construction sector or in one of several factories[5] situated nearby, in Yeni Bosna[6] (a newly emerging industrial center at the time), or in Osmaniye, Bakırköy (an older and relatively more distant industrial center).

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4   With regard to the dominance of the Black Sea community in Zeytinburnu during the 1960s and 1970s, see Burak Gürel, "Agrarian Change and Labour Supply in Turkey, 1950–1980," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 11, no. 2 (2011): 208-09.

5   Major ones include the following: the Edip İplik textile factory established in 1973, the Ürosan chemical factory established in 1973, the Dandy chewing gum factory established in 1974, and the Bahariye Mensucat, which moved from Eyüp to İkitelli in 1988. All of these firms went on to become major players in their respective sectors, and the factories therefore grew. Bahariye Mensucat was already a leading firm when it moved to the region.

6   Altın Yıldız textile and garment factory, established in 1976 by the Boyner family, is the most mentioned employer of the time in Yeni Bosna.

The destiny of the region changed in 1985 when it was announced that the Trans-European Motorway would be built along its northern edge seving as Istanbul's second major artery after a first one, the D-100, further south. Another major development soon followed: a large area to the north of the motorway had been gradually expropriated to build one of the largest, organized industrial zones of Turkey. It was designed to relocate industry from the historical inner city, from Eminönü and the Golden Horn, alleviating pollution and promoting tourism in the city center. The first firms in the industrial zone did not begin operating until 1994 due to bureaucratic and political delays[7] but even the construction process created a vast demand for labor: the zone which occupied 7 square kilometers was planned to accommodate nearly 30 thousand workplaces and employ 300 thousand people. Economic activity in the zone accelerated in the 2000s so that after a partial recovery from the 2001 economic crisis, the employment of the zone reached nearly 150 thousand.[8] The number grew to over 200 thousand in the 2010s.[9] Another development was the construction of a highway that would connect the TEM with the Southern Motorway (D-100) and the Yeşilköy airport. This highway was planned to run along the river around which the Eastern neighborhood of mainly Black Sea natives was located. In 1988 the houses around the river were expropriated for "fair prices" – as noted by many informants – and the construction of the motorway began after the residence moved, mostly to other houses within the same neighborhood.

Until the mid-1990s, the neighborhood was reported to be a *gecekondu* neighborhood, but not in the sense that the buildings were illegal; the parcels had in fact been sold on formal terms. The term implies that the neighborhood maintained the character of a close and relatively small community, composed of mostly single-story houses with gardens. There is a popular nostalgia about

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7   This plan was launched by a right-wing Istanbul municipality mayor Bedreddin Dalan, but his left-wing successor Nurettin Sözen, was not as keen on the plan and slowed down the process. See Cem Özatalay, "Elmanın Öteki Yarısı: Enformel Sektör Işçileri," *TES-İŞ Dergisi* June (2006).

8   Ibid.

9   "İkitelli Organize Sanayi Bölgesi Genel Bilgileri," Istanbul İkitelli Organize Sanayi Bölgesi Başkanlığı, accessed December 10, 2015, http://www.iosb.org.tr/.

those days in which "everybody used to know each other," "the relations were much closer," and "the neighborhood was very safe." On the other hand, women often offer a more unpleasant narrative underscoring the lack of infrastructure, since a gendered division of labor forced women to undertake most of the toilsome tasks that imperfect infrastructure necessitated.[10] 1994 to 1999 were boom years, in which contractors turned single-story houses into low-quality apartment buildings. The owners of a given plot of land usually demanded four apartments from the contractor in exchange for handing over land. The contractors thus became the owner of the remaining apartments and sold them for profit.[11] Most inhabitants reported that the demand for apartments was so high that contractors would sell homes even before construction had begun. Even though the sale of lands to first-comers was formal, the construction of apartment buildings was partially informal in the sense that the buildings did not comply with the formal municipal development and construction plan. To the contrary, they were mostly built larger and higher than permitted.

Many older inhabitants joke about how during this period people who had a small amount of money and some entrepreneurial spirit became constractors even if they had not the vaguest clue about construction. It is widely reported sarcastically, way that "those who sold one pair of oxen," "grocers, greengrocers, butchers," "even some workers who got a large severance payment" became contractors and built apartment buildings. The reason for the

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10   For similar observations on a space and time of infrastructural deficiencies, see Heidi Wedel, *Siyaset Ve Cinsiyet: Istanbu Gecekondularında Kadınların Siyasal Katılımı* (Istanbul: Metis, 2001), 92-93 and 120.

11   For a general account of contractors' transformation of one-story *gecekondu*s to apartment buildings in the 1980s and 1990s and the accompanying government grants of amnesty for informal buildings, see Oğuz Işık and M. Melih Pınarcıoğlu, *Nöbetleşe Yoksulluk: Gecekondulaşma Ve Kent Yoksulları, Sultanbeyli Örneği* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 165-66. Işık and Pınarcıoğlu point out that with widespread amnesty for such buildings, Özal aimed to create conditions which would compensate low-income urban masses what they had lost due to post-1980 economic policies with earnings from the real estate market. Boratav conceptualizes Özal's policy as a conscious class strategy intended to erode working-class consciousness among urban laborers; see Korkut Boratav, *Istanbu Ve Anadolu'dan Sınıf Profilleri* (Ankara: İmge, 2004), 84.

sarcasm is the fact that most contractors did not fulfill their end of the contractual agreements with respect to quality or the timeframe. Moreover, people are leery about the sturdiness of apartment buildings constructed by such contractors given that Istanbul is in an earthquake zone. This construction rush, which took place with little control of public authorities led to an extremely crowded neighborhood full of buildings as high as six or seven stories. Moreover, parcels reserved for parks in the master plan were converted to industrial or trade zones and bought by investors with the corrupt collaboration of the municipality. After the earthquake of 1999, the construction boom stopped. Since then, new apartment buildings built on the few, remaining parcels, or in place of older ones, are totally the tight control of municipality, use higher-quality building materials, and have a maximum of four stories.

The region used to be a scattered working-class, *gecekondu* neighborhood at the outskirts of the city providing shelter for industrial and construction workers working in mostly faraway places. However, when the plans for the motorway, the organized industrial zone, and the connection highway were announced in the mid-1980s and began to be realized by the beginning of the 1990s, the region became a center of industry and transportation. A service sector would also emerge as a result of new transportation opportunities, especially when major private media firms moved their headquarters along the highway in the beginning of the 1990s. Package delivery companies followed them and built distribution centers along the highway in the mid-1990s. On the other hand, the larger factories surrounding the region began to move out

of Istanbul to places like Çerkezköy or Gebze in the 2000s.[12] This partial de-industrialization of the areas surrounding the highway was followed by service sector investments: two hotels, one mall,[13] and certain, other retail stores.

A limited increase in the influx of retail sector is even evident in the İkitelli Organized Industrial Zone, since Istanbul itself had grown towards the north and east. Başakşehir, a whole region of middle-class gated communities emerged to the north of the industrial zone and grew so quickly that it became a borough of its own in 2008. A working-class community built by contractors grew in Altınşehir to the east of the industrial zone, while an ambitious mass housing project by TOKİ was built in Kayabaşı at the northeast end of the zone. There are discussions about removing some firms from the Organized Industrial Zone to a new one planned for Silivri, but the process has not yet begun.

2.1.2 *Communities, Civil Society, and Local Politics*

In 2011, the Mehmet Akif neighborhood had nearly 53 thousand registered inhabitants and was claimed to actually have nearly 60 thousand by its *muhtar*. The Atatürk neighborhood consists of a smaller area than Mehmet Akif and even includes a small part of the organized industrial zone within its borders. Its formal inhabitants were nearly 41 thousand in 2011, and its *muhtar* claimed the population was actually near 45 thousand. Thus taken together as a region

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12   Edip İplik built its second factory in Lüleburgaz in 1988. Until its final closure in 2005, the İkitelli factory was gradually moved to Lüleburgaz. Ürosan founded a second factory in Samandıra in 1988 and moved most production there, but the factory near İkitelli is still supports a moderate part of the production, employing approximately one hundred people. The Dandy chewing gum factory was moved to Gebze in 2010. Bahariye moved most of its production to Çorlu in 2009, but it still employing less than two hundred people in its İkitelli factory.

13   Edip İplik, mentioned in the previous note, could not successfully manage its textile business and closed its Lüleburgaz factory in 2008. Afterward, the firm transformed itself into a construction firm, Edip Gayrimenkul, and its first project was to build a huge mall, called 212, on its own property where the İkitelli factory had been located.

the two neighborhoods were formally inhabited by nearly 100 thousand people. If we add the fact that the residential area of the two neighborhoods is less than 2.5 kilometers square, the density of the population is astounding.[14]

In terms of the hometowns of various communities, the largest is from Black Sea region, which constitutes one third of the population in the Atatürk neighborhood, and more than half in Mehmet Akif. Within that community, those from Samsun are most represented in both neighborhoods, followed by those from Sinop, Giresun and Ordu. Besides having roots in the Black Sea region, assumed Turkish ethnicity and Sunni Islam are what unite them in contrast to the other two major communities of Alevis – mostly from Tokat – and Kurds from the Eastern provinces.[15] The mostly Alevi community from Tokat comprise approximately 20 percent of Atatürk, and nearly a quarter of Mehmet Akif residents. There are also Alevis from other hometowns and of Kurdish origin, but they are a minority among the Alevi community. A splendid *Cem Evi* in the middle of the region, right next to the first mosque of the neighborhood, is also a sign of the significant Alevi community.[16] The last major community is that of Kurds, a large minority in the region constituting nearly one fourth of Atatürk and 15 percent of Mehmet Akif residents. There are also residents from Thrace constituting no more than 4 percent of the population of either neighborhood, and an even smaller community of Dadaş from Erzurum with Turkish ethnic origins in the Atatürk neighborhood.

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14   Başakşehir, a newly founded borough north of İkitelli, had a population of nearly 200 thousand in 2011, while the borough of Küçükçekmece of which İkitelli is a part, had a population of 674.795.

15   For the significance of sectarian divisions between Sünnis and Alevis in the formation of urban communities in Turkey, see Dubetsky, "Class and Community in Urban Turkey," 362; Erder, *Kentsel Gerilim: Enformel Ilişki Ağları Araştırması*, 131-41. Erder reported that in mid-1990s, the growing Kurdish community in Istanbul did not create new urban tensions, rather Kurds participated in the existing class and sectarıan tensions. More than ten years later, Tuğal provided a detailed account of how ethnic tensions between Kurds and Turks were aggravated with the advancement of the Kurdish question. See ibid., 155; Tugal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism*, 185-90.

16   The *Cem Evi* has been in service since the mid-1990s, but was gradually renovated between 2007 to 2010.

The Turk-Sunnis, most of whom are from the Black Sea, generally maintain a vibrant relation to their hometowns not only through home-town communities in the neighborhood, but also directly. Most visit their villages during their annual, typically summer leaves. A great number of them still own land in their villages, and particularly those who have hazelnut groves in the Black Sea region ask or pay relatives in their villages to take care of their land, providing money for the necessary equipment and supplies. These visits are mostly scheduled in the harvest season so that the families can harvest their crops with the help of relatives and co-villagers. The income provided by hazelnut production is moderate for the majority of those urban residents owning growes. Many parents born in the villages dream of building a new house in their village and wish to go back after the retirement; indeed, many people seem to do that.

Local politics in the neighborhood revolves around hometown communities, consolidated along ethnic and sectarian divides. The elections for *muhtar* directly reflect divisions between the Alevi and Black Sea communities. Both communities try to unite amongst themselves and nominate one strong candidate against the other. For example, in Mehmet Akif in 2004, an Alevi won the election thanks to the support of Kurds and disunity among the Black Sea communities. A man from Giresun became *muhtar* in 2009 due to a much labored, wide coalition of people from the Black Sea. In the Atatürk neighborhood, on the other hand, a Kurdish candidate supported by the BDP became *muhtar* in 2009 – the first Kurd to hold the position in İkitelli history. This was due both to the Kurdish block vote and to the candidate's personal popularity even among some Turks. In line with national trends since the second half of 2000s all three major communities – Black Sea, Alevi and Kurdish – seem to be further solidifying around distinct political parties: the AKP, the CHP, and the BDP/HDP, respectively.

When the two neighborhoods are considered as a single constituency, the AKP received 52 percent of the vote in the 2011 general elections – two more than its national share and three more than its share in Istanbul. The CHP

received exactly the same – 27 percent[17] - and the MHP received 8 percent, which was five percent less than its national share.[18] The independent candidate of the BDP won 10 percent, naely three more than the national share of the total for all independent candidates. If we look at two neighborhoods individually, Mehmet Akif gave 5 percent greater support to the AKP than its national share, while Atatürk gave 2 percent less than the nation as a whole. Votes for the BDP demonstrate the second divergence between the two neighborhoods. The BDP's candidate won 12 percent in Atatürk, but only 8 percent in Mehmet Akif.

There are certain social tensions among the three major communities, but links, relationships, and friendships crossing these barriers are ample. Everyday life flows without many incidents other than occasional quarrels and uncommon fights between groups of young males, especially between Kurds and Black Sea people. A shocking and unexpected incident took place in the summer of 2011, when the *muhtar* of Mehmet Akif, a man from Giresun, shot two Kurdish Alevis from Dersim in a fight that escalated from dispute over parking spaces. The Alevi community was alarmed and organized protests, marches for over a week, during which the *muhtar*'s hardware shop was destroyed. The *muhtar* surrendered to police after the murder and his family left the neighborhood. The Black Sea, Sunni community did defend the *muhtar*, whose popularity was already eroding. It became clear that the incident was no conspiracy, but an individual action of the *muhtar* who was drunk at the time of the incident. While the social structure of inequality and othering supported by state that led *muhtar* to dare such violent behavior was obvious to the Alevi community, the absence of a conspiracy helped to relax tensions over the following weeks.

In İkitelli, hometown associations abound but most serve practitally as coffeehouses. Some of these associations mobilize during local elections, as mentioned above, but ordinarily few hometown associations organize regular activities. Among the Black Sea, Sunni population on which I focus in this

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17 The CHP's share of vote in Istanbul was 31 percent. This means that the CHP received 4 percent less in the neighborhood compared to the city as a whole.

18 The MHP's share of the vote in Istanbul was 9 percent, so the ratio in neighborhood was very close to the city as a whole.

research, there are several dynamic Islamic associations. The Mehmet Akif Medeniyet Association is one of them, run by an Islamist fraction established at the end of the 1980s. It is an example of the less-traditional, more modernist and radical Islamism of the 1980s and 1990s. The association is run by local residents, mostly small businessmen. They are very active in organizing lectures and special Islamic educational programs for adults and children, but participants in these activities number no more than several hundred. Their most effective activities are charitable, which are well-known and appeal to the neighborhood. The head of this association was very popular and was one of the four formal assistants (*aza*) of the *muhtar*. When the *muhtar* was arrested after the double homicide, this assistant became *muhtar* and his performance as the *muhtar* was widely admired. In the 2014 local elections, he became a member of the municipal council of the AKP.

Another active Islamist group in the neighborhood is one known by its founder's name, the *Süleymancı*s. They operate one large and three small dormitories for students in the neighborhood, one of which also serves as a nursery. The facilities accommodate children from the neighborhood an elsewhere. The *Süleymancı*s are not as integrated into the neighborhood as the aforementioned association, but the valuable services they provide have made them known and popular. In a working-class neighborhood where the quality of education in public schools is very low, they offer additional educational support for moderate prices and even free for the bright children. Although there are exceptions, they prefer to house children on weekdays even if their families live in the neighborhood. Beyond courses to support the school curriculum, they not unexpectedly give courses on Islam and try to recruit children into their movement, although seemingly not in an aggressive way.

Two *tarikat*s are active in the neighborhood – namely İsmailağa and Menzil, but their activities are more limited compared to two groups mentioned above. They have their own coffeehouses and organize talks, gatherings, and readings. The Islamist Saadet Partisi (SP), the political party, AKP originally rooted in, has a youth center in the Mehmet Akif neighborhood, which while still quite active, was reported have once been even more vibrant. This local center might explain the one percent additional vote share of the SP received in the neighborhood as compared to Istanbul as a whole. In general, Islamic

organizations, but especially the two mentioned first, are among the most active associations in the neighborhood's Turkish Sunni community. However, this does not mean that the community is particularly religious compared to other working-class neighborhoods of Istanbul. The turnout in neighborhood's mosques is not impressive except during Ramadan and Cuma prayers. The activities of the Islamist organizations that feature exclusively religious content attract limited numbers of people.

2.1.3   *Work and Employment*

The vast majority of working population in the two neighborhoods are manual workers. This is an observation shared by everybody with whom I had a contact in the neighborhood. The workers of İkitelli, and especially those with Turk-Sunni identity, are mostly employed in regular jobs in the formal sector. To use Tugal's terms, most are "proletarians" rather than "subproletarians," by which Tugal means workers with irregular wages and very precarious, most likely informal employment.[19]

There are a small number of employers living in the neighborhood, most of whom are the owners of small garment workshops, a few of furniture workshops, and even fewer of medium-sized garment workshops in the neighborhood. Since almost one hundred thousand people live in two neighborhoods and they are relatively isolated from its surroundings, daily consumption in terms of both products and services is done within the neighborhood. This demand has resulted in the emergence of numerous grocery stores, supermarkets, coffeehouses, real estate agents, stores of construction craftsman, hairdressers, bakeries, and the like by local entrepreneurs. As Erder observed in a different but similar borough of Istanbul in the 1990s, the local political structure and urbanization process with a high level of informality support an economic structure where petty entrepreneurship is encouraged.[20] I met or heard of few people who had a small store in the neighborhood but lived somewhere else.

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19   Cihan Tugal, ""Serbest Meslek Sahibi": Neoliberal Subjectivity among Istanbul' Popular Sectors," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 46 (2012): 65.

20   Sema Erder, *Istanbul'd Bir Kent Kondu: Ümraniye* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996), 143-59.

A few employers run businesses elsewhere, and those have some special, typically family-related reasons for continuing to live in the neighborhood. Most of the people in the neighborhood report that whenever a family earns enough money to do so, they move out of the neighborhood. There is a widespread belief that almost all of the employers living in the neighborhood arrived at that point through upward mobility, from being a worker. Except for a few people who started their urban careers with petty entrepreneurism, this seems to be true. The garment sector, with its immense volume seems to be especially fertile for making such upward mobility possible. However, upward mobility may be moderate in terms of earnings, and more importantly, downward mobility is common shortly after an upward move.

Many workers of the neighborhood are employed in the organized industrial zone, but they are not the majority and the places to which people travel to work are varied. Unsurprisingly, the largest concentration is the textile and garment sectors, if only by a slight margin. Besides those in the industrial zone, within the neighborhood there are many small garment workshops, as well as roughly 30 mid-sized workshops employing more than fifty people. Workshop owners report that there are around 100-150 workshops and add that many more existed before the crisis in 2009.[21] Mostly young men and women of all ages comprise the ranks in this sector.

Manufacturing workers other than garment workers are employed in the metal, electronics, food, and furniture industries. There are nearly 40 furniture workshops in two neighborhoods, most of which are suppliers for MASKO.[22] There are a number of janitors and security guards working in the industrial

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21   The number is an educated guess, because they require daily information from the outsourcing officials of the bigger firms these workshops produce. The data acquired from the tax administration office suggests, after subtracting those in the industrial zone, there were 87 operating garment firms in two neighborhoods in 2010. But the officials who provided this dara reported that it is not totally reliable for various bureaucratic reasons.

22   MASKO was originally planned as an industrial estate for the furniture production. Parallel with the semi-deindustrialization of the region, it was by and large converted to a furniture retail center. There are more than 750 stores in MASKO and the stores prefer to employ women as charwomen from the surrounding neighborhoods as charwomen. Many of these are employed informally.

zone or in other nearby firms, mostly as subcontracted workers. Construction is another important sector, though workers report that they earn much less than before due to monopolization within the sector. White-collar professionals and civil servants are present but constitute a very small minority. A teacher working in the local primary school noted that his colleagues wondered why he lived there.

Differentiating among "class-relevant divisions"[23] within this large employee population is useful for comprehending the population of this study. "Skills and expertise" will be one axis of differentiation, because they potentially place a worker "in a privileged appropriation location within exploitation relations."[24] The other axis I propose is whether the person was born in another hometown or in Istanbul. Although the implications of the latter can be less apparent with respect to class location, urban experience has a potentially significant impact on class location and subjectivity.[25]

Table 2.1   Class-relevant divisions among employees of İkitelli

	Unskilled workers	Semi-skilled & skilled workers	White collar & university graduates
Born in another hometown	Those who could not take root in a sector or workplace	Thanks to seniority in a workplace or sector	Very few, mostly civil servants
Born in Istanbul (mostly youth)	Mostly dropouts from high school	Mostly vocational high school graduates	Few, inter-generational upward mobility

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23   Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 15.

24   Ibid., 18.

25   Ira Katznelson, *Marxism and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 141-56 and 203-56. For similar accounts on the Turkish experience see Hakan Koçak, "Türkiye İşçi Sınıfının Oluşumunun Sessiz Yılları: 1950'ler," *Toplum ve Bilim* 113 (2008): 122; Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, *Nöbetleşe Yoksulluk: Gecekondulaşma Ve Kent Yoksulları, Sultanbeyli Örneği*; Erder, *Istanbul'da Bir Kent Kondu: Ümraniye*.

As I mentioned, white collar, university graduate workers are very few in the neighborhood. The number of children of migrants who manage to graduate from a university is growing moderately, but they tend to eventually leave the neighborhood. The vast majority of workers occupy the first two columns of the table. The difference between the first and second columns does not necessarily correlate with a significant difference in overall income or in living conditions, because differences in wealth are also conditioned by access to urban rents and attempts at petty entrepreneurship. However, the distinction is crucial because skilled workers do mostly enjoy higher wages and greater job security compared with unskilled worker. Most of the characters appearing in the following pages will be in the first row of the first and second columns.

2.1.4 *Being a Worker in İkitelli: Introduction to the Subjective Account*

A popular saying is a good point of entry for the discussion of how workers and their families conceive of wage work. "*El işi*"[26] is a noun phrase widely used to mean wage work and roughly translates to "stranger's business," implying that the condition to work in a business owned and run by a stranger.[27]

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26 In Turkish the noun phrase "el işi" has another meaning, which is more familiar among educated segments of the Turkish population. It means hand-made (the word "el" can mean either hand or stranger). The meaning I am explaining here should not be misinterpreted as hand-made.

27 I will give two other informative examples of how workers name wage labor in non-European contexts. "Dagong" is the popular Chinese term used for "working for the bosses" or "selling labor to the bosses." For example, a formerly factory worker, recently a clerk woman may say: "I don't know how long I can continue dagong." Different than "el işi," dagong does not include the notion of working for a stranger. It literally means to toil, with the vague implication of manual work. See Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*, 136 and 204. In Nigeria during the 1970s, where among Muslims, factory labor was called "aikin bature," which literally means "working with Europeans." At that time "the nationality of the dominant class to whom Muslim workers are subordinated in the industrial workplace is nearly always European." Therefore, wage labor in a capitalist enterprise was seen as "alien and, if not inherently un-Islamic, certainly as a set of alien social relations introduced by European colonialism." Lubeck later translated the term as "working for Europeans." See Lubeck, *Islam and Urban Labor in Northern Nigeria: The Making of a Muslim Working Class*, 289-91; "Islamic Political Movements in Northern Nigeria: The Problem of Class Analysis," in

As a colloquial word not used by educated urbanites, "*el*" has a clearly negative and unpleasant connotation, implying that this stranger is unreliable.

Cengiz (1967)[28] was a skilled, senior factory worker who often expressed that he liked his job and working. He was planning to keep working in his factory even after his retirement age, but not long before he was to qualify for retirement, he began making plans to become a self-employed driver. When I asked him about this change in plans, he answered: "I've had enough of *el işi*." While explaining his experience in a factory where he had worked for ten years, another skilled factory worker, Nafız (1973), stated, "I did not consider the job to be *el işi*, as a stranger's business. I embraced it as my own." Erkan (1982) once worked as a garment worker for ten years and had been running his own ironing and packaging workshop for six years since. Remembering his days as a worker, he claimed: "While I was a worker I always worked as if it was my own business. I didn't say 'this is *el işi*, I don't care!' and things like that." A retired worker, Hüseyin (1944), often complained that his son who was running his own auto mechanic workshop was not making enough money and was constantly demanding loans from his father to compensate. Hüseyin was angry and explained his son's attitude by stating "he doesn't want to do *el işi*, to be under someone's command."[29]

During a living-room chat with Adil, his wife Yeter\ and Yeter's sister Güler, Yeter complained to her sister about her job. For two or three days a week, Yeter cleans the building where Adil works as a superintendent. Yeter explained, "The job exhausts me, sister. It is not like cleaning your own home." Güler responded, "It is *el işi*, it is always different, it is harder." Minutes later, I asked Güler whether her daughter, a university graduate about to get married, was working. She explained: "Of course she is working. What else can one do,

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Islam, Politics, and Social Movements, ed. Edmund III Burke and Ira M. Lapidus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 254.

28 Since I believe age is a crucial determinant of subjectivity, I have provided the date of birth of the crucial characters in parentheses after their names when I first introduce them.

29 Before this fieldwork I was unaware of this use of the term *el işi*. After learning that, a verse in a well-known poem of Nazım Hikmet, "*Davet*" (Call), seemed much more meaningful: "*Kapansın el kapıları bir daha açılmasın, yok edin insanın insana kulluğunu, bu davet bizim*" ("Let the doors of stranger close and never open back, terminate the servitude of men to men, this is our call").

if you are like us? You work in *el işi*. We don't have our own business, our own establishment (*kurulu düzen*)." Yeter continued: "That's the way it is. Even if you get a university education, you have to work for a stranger (*el*). Nothing changes." Güler concluded: "That's right. If one's father does not have a business, this is the only way."

The current residents of İkitelli are mostly those who recently migrated from villages. I encountered few middle-aged people born in Istanbul. Agricultural production in the villages of Turkey mostly revolves around small farmers,[30] which means that the workers of İkitelli mostly came from independent, farming families. They have experience or intimate knowledge of working as independent producer. Many have a brother or a cousin still living and working in the village. This makes them more conscious of wage work and the dependency it involves.

I was chatting with Hanife, her husband Mustafa, and her brother Adem in her living room. Hanife mentioned her older brother who had, after a short stint, decided not to settle in the city and to keep living in the village. When I asked why those who stay in the village do so, Hanife explained:

> The key issue is *el işi*. Those who do not come to city do not want to work in *el işi*. They want to keep doing their own business; they want to work one day and rest the other. But these [pointing to her husband and brother] came to city and have been working in *el işi* for 20 years. Not easy, not at all, but they keep working. The others, they don't want anyone ordering them what to do. My brother wasted himself by staying in the village.

Previously during the same chat, I had asked Adem (1978), a janitor working in the organized industrial zone, what he does exactly during a given workday. He provided a common response: "I do whatever they tell me. What else I can do? It is *el işi*."

One might think that the marked reference to wage labor as "el iş" means that the experience or possibility of becoming self-employed or an employer is common (not only back in village, but also in the urban economy). Indeed,

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30 Fatma Gül Ünal, *Land Ownership Inequality and Rural Factor Markets in Turkey: A Study for Critically Evaluating Market Friendly Reforms* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 16-28.

workers in İkitelli usually have at least some relative or acquaintance who has done just this. As I will examine in the last section of this chapter, many male, middle-aged workers actually have a petty entrepreneurship experience in their work history. Many report some relative or someone from their village that moved significantly upwards. Others have plans to become a petty entrepreneur. While "el işi" entails a popular resentment towards the wage labor, capitalism conditions this resentment, igniting the desire for entrepreneurism.

Another popular statement is that "the worker is always oppressed."[31] This is a pessimistic but keen account of being a worker, even more so in neoliberal times. While providing a clear awareness of the nature of wage labor, the statement also suggests disempowerment, pessimism, and hopelessness for expanding one's rights as a worker, for example, through collective action. The grammar of the statement is worth considering. A defense mechanism seems to step in, and instead of "I" or "we," the third-person singular is preferred. It is always difficult to admit that yourself are oppressed and cannot do much about it.[32] This distancing of oneself from the "worker" while pointing to his oppression is also related to imagined or real possibilities and/or experience of self-employment.

This expression of working-class cynicism also serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy: the usage of such a phrase in workers' daily conversation invites a sad sigh, reinforcing the idea that resistance against employers is futile. In the abstract sense, under the conditions of capitalism the worker is indeed always oppressed. But in daily life there are many opportunities for workers to defend their dignity: to challenge and reduce their oppression and exploitation to a degree. As Hodson states, "there is much to be negotiated on a daily basis between employees and management."[33] Workers always have a certain power, which rests their "practical autonomy"[34] and on their potential to mobilize,

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31   Other similar phrases include the following: "it is always the worker who is being oppressed," and "it is always the worker's misfortune."

32   Cobb and Sennett point out the loss of "I" in worker's conversation (1972, 193-194). It is reminiscent of their question of whether alienation is a way of defending one's inner self.

33   Randy Hodson, *Dignity at Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 43.

34   Ibid., 266.

since "mobilization generates political leverage not vice versa."[35] Some workers who use such coins of phrase can be actually quite resistant at work. This reveals that the discourse is mostly, but not wholly pessimistic.

The phrase "working class" is – unsurprisingly – almost never used except by a few leftist workers almost all of whom are Alevi. However, the "working segment" (*işçi kesimi*) is an often heard phrase, as in a variation of the aforementioned statement: "the working segment is always oppressed." One hears the same term in response to the question of what local people do for living: "most of the residents are from working segment." There are anyway not many occasions in daily life in which one needs to refer to workers as a category. During talks with middle-aged workers about parties for which they had voted, the name of the social democrat leader of the 1970s, Ecevit was frequently mentioned: "He did good things for the working segment." Occasionally, when somewhat depressed, a pro-AKP worker may say some version of the following: "The AKP is a great party, but it didn't give much to the working segment." There are other terms to label more or less the same group of people (in which the speakers include themselves) focusing on consumption capacity like the "sparing segment" (*idare kesimi*) or the "needy segment" (*gariban kesim*). There are also those terms that build on a hierarchical imagination (the "lower segment"), on urban dichotomies (the "rural segment"), or on education (the "ignorant segment").

Another popular axiom among fathers gives a clue about working class conditions: "If I don't work for just two months, this wheel won't turn" (*İki ay çalışmasam bu çark dönmez*). It expresses the fear of unemployment and the anxiety of living on the edge at subsistence level. Many workers employ this sentence when explaining why they delay needed procedures for medical conditions mostly caused by their occupations. To mention casually that one has been working non-stop since eight, thirteen, or fifteen years old is a popular way of expressing pride among workers. When a worker is angry or dissatisfied, one may hear: "We are working this many hours in a day for just a few pennies."

There is not much expectation to develop one's career except to try one's luck at petty entrepreneurship. Mustafa, a security guard working in İSTOÇ,

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35   Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*, 25.

a nearby whole sale trade zone, expressed his idea of career by referring to the lyrics of a popular song by a female artist: "I can have both a baby and a career." Mustafa, with whom I had become close, was giving me advice after my wedding about the right time to have a child. As usualy, he wanted to remind me of our class differences in a funny way: "Of course you can have both a baby and a career, but we, the working (*amele*) segment, we cannot have a career. But we can make a lot of children!"[36]

§ 2.2   Mehmet and Sema

As Harvey stresses, "whereas the laborer as an economic role – the category Marx analyses in *Capital* – is singular […] the laborer as a person is a worker, consumer, saver, lover, and bearer of culture, and can even be an occasional employer and landed proprietor."[37] The life-story approach is appropriate for scrutinizing dynamic and multiple subjectivities. As pointed by Portelli: "the working class is made up of individuals enriched by their complex lives and multiple identities."[38] For this section, I will present a brief history of Mehmet, the protagonist in this research, as an illuminating case of Turkish working-class experience and subjectivity. Presenting a detailed portrait will disclose what the generalizations and abstractions in the previous section actually mean in daily life.

Mehmet is from a village in the Black Sea region and enjoys a large network of friends and relatives in the neighborhood. As a somewhat representative Sunni Turk of the neighborhood, he calls himself a "conservative," but he

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36   Halle points out the same fact by saying that "[blue collar workers] typically have jobs, not carriers." According to Halle this means that "blue collar workers are less likely than some upper white collar workers to blur the distinction between work and leisure or to subordinate friendships and other personal relations to the quest for upward mobility." See David Halle, *America's Working Man: Work, Home, and Politics among Blue Collar Property Owners* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), 294.

37   David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 102.

38   Alessandro Portelli, ""This Mill Won't Run No More": Oral History and Deindustrialization," in *New Working Class Studies*, ed. John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 59.

is not a particularly religious man, a fact his wife Sema uses to tease him and sometimes to criticize him.[39] He is an unskilled worker, who could not be stable in the same workplace or sector for long. In terms of political orientation, Mehmet is an average, center-right, working-class voter, moving from the ANAP to the RP and the AKP, admiring Özal and Erdoğan. He never hesitates to criticize the AKP when appropriate, which is a rare quality among AKP voters, becoming even rarer in the 2010s with the solidification of the AKP's hegemony. Except for the times he is depressed or tired, he is eager to talk about politics, an area about which he can always provide enlightened statements. This interest of his is one reason he seeks my company. I discovered an important facet of him much later in our relationship, after introducing him to a female friend of mine conducting separate research: Mehmet is a handsome man who, as my friend put it, is almost as cute as Kadir İnanır, a Turkish film star.[40] He is actually aware of this and dresses well.

Two different life experiences make Mehmet's life not necessarily representative but revealing. The first is his involvement as a leading figure in a "lost," 2007 unionization struggle, and the second is his attempt to move beyond being a worker by becoming a self-employed real estate agent. The former experience made him much better informed, but left him pessimistic about working-class struggle. With this experience of class struggle behind him, from time to time he makes very succinct and radical remarks from within the everyday worker consciousness. His second experience is a dream shared by the majority of workers that he dared to pursue due to his wife Sema's wage labor and his social skills. The experience is a good case for observing the trajectory of the working class dream of upward mobility via petty entrepreneurship.

Mehmet was born in 1968 in a small village, Evci, in the district of Terme in Samsun, where agricultural production for the market is concentrated

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39   Parallel with the global trends in Turkey, women appear to be more religious than men, and Sema is definitely more religious than Mehmet. The relative percentages of those who report to perform namaz five times a day is 22 for men and 41 for women. See Yılmaz Esmer, *Türkiye Değerler Atlası* (Istanbul: Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2012), 96.

40   Although it is fictional, Pamuk imagines a wonderful way how an individual member of working class's handsomeness may affect and ease his life in certain ways. See Orhan Pamuk, *Kafamda Bir Tuhaflık* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2014).

around the hazelnut. Following Adil, who was born in 1965, he was the fourth in a family that would later see one sister and one additional brother. After the loss of their father in 1979, the family experienced hard times, but thanks to their firm mother and her two oldest, they survived. Following his older brother Adil, Mehmet began to come to Istanbul for seasonal work in the construction sector in 1985, and he continued this pattern after he completed his military service in 1990. Once, when Adil and Mehmet finished working on the construction of a building for a clock-trading firm in İkitelli in 1993, the boss of the firm said that he would like to see one of the brothers keep working for him as a janitor. Mehmet is still a man with high aspirations. The boss' offer was for a steady job, but for half the wage he was earning at the time in the booming construction sector, so he left the position for his brother Adil, who holds it to this day.

Adil and Mehmet were married in a joint wedding in 1993. Adil married Yeter, a girl from Giresun that he had met in İkitelli, who had fled from onerous work of village life to be with her married sister living in İkitelli. Mehmet's mother arranged for him to marry Sema, the daughter of a neighbor in the village. After the wedding, Adil and Yeter moved to İkitelli to build their life as a new couple. Yeter's sister was there, as was Adil's job. Mehmet and Sema moved to a rented apartment in Kıraç, where Mehmet found a work in a big textile factory. In Kıraç, they had also a few acquaintances from their hometown. Even though the two brothers migrated to Istanbul, they never lost their relations with the village. Every year during the hazelnut harvest season – around August – both families go to the village for at least one week to collect the harvest of their small plots, which are their share of the family lands. Though unstable due to fluctuations in the harvest and the price, this practice generates a moderate income, which is generally no less than the value of a couple monthly wages. During the rest of the year, their two older brothers who live in the village take care of their hazelnut groves.

After Mehmet and Sema's daughter Pınar turned one in 1995, they sent her to Sema's parents in Evci, and Sema began to work in the same factory as Mehmet. The couple worked together for nearly three years. In 1994, Mehmet engaged in the first of his transactions with the urban land market. He bought a plot in Kıraç with his brother, Adil, which he later sold in 1996. In 1997, he bought another, this time with his brother-in-law, and sold it at the end of the

same year. He engaged in a third such transaction in 1998, this time with his father-in-law. Mehmet explained his experience with the property market thusly: "You should engage in trading, that's how one can make money. Land makes money. I did not earn all of this money from my worker wages, I bought and sold land." Following his own advice, Mehmet kept watching out for opportunities in real estate market, a desire that led him to try his chance as a real estate agent.

Mehmet landed his most beloved job in 1998. He was on the security staff for a German transportation company's headquarters and trailer truck' garage. This job provided him with new opportunities for small-scale trade. With the help of his moderate authority to decide which trucks would go into the garage first, he bought small, imported commodities for cheap prices from the internationally-traveled truck drivers and earned extra money by selling them to his acquaintances. By the time Mehmet was fired when security for the firm was subcontracted in 2000, Sema had already quit her job following the birth of their second child, a son called Akın. By that time, they had accumulated a certain amount of money due to their two incomes and the land transactions; they decided to buy their own apartment. He took his brother's advice to move close by more seriously, and with the help of Adil, they bought an apartment in İkitelli, Mehmet Akif neighborhood, moving there in 2000. Though he had just moved from Kıraç, Mehmet then found a job in a plastic pipe factory in his old neighborhood. Mehmet always relates that "the 80s were good; we did not see anything good after Özal passed away. Also, the Erbakan years were good. There was work at that time; a worker could find job. We earned good money in those years."

In his new factory, Mehmet recalls that they were never paid the whole of their wages. It was always announced that some portion would be paid later, especially after the economic crisis of 2001: "The boss kept saying 'we are going bankrupt, we are going bankrupting!' but in the mean-time we heard that he was building a new factory in Çorlu. Later we also heard that he was about to build a new one in Azerbaijcan! I said myself, that's enough then." He worked there three years and could not endure more. In 2003, he quit the job and thanks to a couple of friends in the Mehmet Akif neighborhood, he found a new one at Dandy, a chewing gum factory producing for a major brand of the sector, employing nearly one thousand people. Mehmet did not earn much,

and Sema began to do home-based work as she had no one to look after their son. She remembers her efforts: "I used to labor the whole day, but could not earn more than 100 or 150 million."[41] Since she earned so little at home, she began working as part-time, flexible worker in nearby garment workshops once Akın began school in 2006.

Mehmet's employment at Dandy was his longest-lasting job experience, as he had never managed to work in the same workplace for more than three years. In this less repressive work environment, he built a large network of friends. But after years of earning only minimum wage, he had become very critical of the management. Partially because of this, but also because of his self-confidence and ambition, he whole-heartedly joined in when a unionization campaign started at the end of 2006.

Mehmet had never worked in a unionized workplace. He was not even sure what a union did exactly, when he firstly heard of the attempts to unionize from his co-workers. But in time, he became a leader of the campaign, and he experienced and learned class struggle in its overt and collective forms – a process I witnessed and in which I closely engaged. Many times, he mobilized his coworkers to perform small protests within the factory, and the managers threatened him several times due to this leadership. He became a critical-minded class struggle activist at the time due to his open-minded character, but was also encouraged by a "culture of solidarity" he experienced with his friends.[42] At the point he realized the union chief was not being honest with the workers and was trying to pacify the mobilization, he even tried to organize his friends against the union chief. The backlash was a shock. The union chie personally threatened him, and a worker close to the union chief spread a rumor that Mehmet had sexually harassed a female coworker. Neither his friends nor the personnel manager gave any credit to the slanderous accusation, and the female coworker said she did not even know Mehmet. Immediately after Mehmet was exonerated, the slanderer left the factory and returned to his family in Antalya.

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41   Around one fourth of theminimum wage at the time.

42   Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

While unionization at the factory was authorized in the beginning of 2008, Mehmet, like many workers, was already alienated from the union, albeit in a more personal and emotional way. He did not feel able to work there and expressed his desire to quit to the management. The management had announced at the end of 2007 that the factory would move to Gebze, so there was a policy to let workers who did not want to come to Gebze quit with severance pay. In August 2008, he quit, collected his severance pay, and went to his hometown of Samsun to harvest the hazelnuts on his modest plot, just as he does every year. Another episode thus began in his life.

After quitting Dandy he could not find a steady job. He was not in hurry since he would receive moderate but precious unemployment benefits for ten months. Meanwhile, at the beginning of 2008, Sema began to work as a janitor in a hospital in Bakırköy once she felt that Pınar, her daughter then age 15, could handle Akın when he came from school. Mehmet foresaw that to find a decent and convenient job in İkitelli would be hard because he was 40, had no specific skills, and the big factories were leaving the area. Thus, once he realized he would not keep working at Dandy, he had for some time been considering a move to Çerkezköy, where he hoped to establish a small business. Çerkezköy was and still is a developing industrial basin, one of the main destinations of the factories leaving Istanbul. It holds the promise of opportunity especially in the real estate market and retail sector for those who dream of becoming small entrepreneurs.[43]

In the fall he sold their apartment in the neighborhood to increase his capital, and the family moved to a nearby rental apartment. With the money he gathered, Mehmet intended to buy land and build an apartment on it. His first plan was to move in Çerkezköy after finishing the building: He would sell the apartment building and use the money as capital for his real estate enterprise. His long-term goal was to become a real estate agent in Çerkezköy. He was

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43 As foreseen, urban rents for the working class have been leveling off in Istanbul, because the city has reached to its geographic limits. However, there are new opportunities in the neighboring towns Çerkezköy and Çorlu, where the urban growth is intact. In all of the real estate offices in İkitelli, one sees addvertisements for plots and apartments in Çerkezköy and Çorlu. In coffeehouses people talk about and share information about real estate opportunities in those towns.

aware that he would need some time to raise the money to build his business; accordingly, he foresaw the need to continue working as a worker for some more time in the supposedly promising labor market of Çerkezköy. Mehmet was tired of having been a worker for so many years, a common, understandable feeling among workers here and there.[44] He was certain that he wanted to establish his own business and work "outdoors," since he had enough of working indoors in the factories. He had confidence in his trading and entrepreneurial skills. Through his newly formed relations in Çerkezköy with people mostly from Samsun, he had acquired a certain knowledge of and access to the land and construction markets in Çerkezköy.

While Mehmet was busy expanding a network in Çerkezköy and finding an appropriate plot to buy Sema quit her job at the hospital at the end of 2008. The municipality canceled the minibus line that she used to take her from their apartment directly to the hospital. In terms of public transportation, the neighborhood has always been poor. Sema had been working the evening shift at the hospital between 2:00 to 11:00 o'clock, so she did not want to have to use two modes of transportation at so late an hour. However, after doing some research and with some help of friends she found a job in January 2009 as a

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44 For the United States, see Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 228-31; Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 36; Sharryn Kasmir, "Activism and Class Identity and at the Saturn Automobile Factory," in *Social Movements: An Anthropological Reader*, ed. John Nash (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 90; Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*, 103, 225; Phillip H Kim, Kyle C Longest, and Howard E Aldrich, "Can You Lend Me a Hand? Task-Role Alignment of Social Support for Aspiring Business Owners," *Work and occupations* 40, no. 1 (2013). For England, see Mike Savage, Gaynor Bagnall, and Brian Longhurst, "Local Habitus and Working-Class Culture," in *Rethinking Class*, ed. Fiona Devine, et al. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 115. For China, see Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*, 131, 39, 228. For Taiwan, see Diane E. Davis, *Discipline and Development: Middle Classes and Prosperity in East Asia and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 229. Nevertheless, it is not a universal constant. Lamont points that the aspiration to become an entrepreneur is much less common among French workers vis-à-vis their American counterparts, Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*, 227.

charwoman in a large furniture store, Seray. The store was in the aforementioned industrial estate for furniture producers called MASKO[45] within the nearby industrial zone. Contrary to similar jobs, the job offered social security.

In the fall of 2008, Mehmet found a good plot in Çerkezköy and bought it. Thanks to his social skills, he earned the confidence of a construction contractor in Çerkezköy and borrowed a considerable amount of money from him to be able to build a two story apartment on his plot. Construction began in November and lasted until April 2009. In those months, Mehmet kept looking for a job in İkitelli; for his risky enterprise they had sold their house and were paying rent. He searched hard and at Sema's prompting he found a job in MASKO as a porter transporting furniture to the customers. He preferred to be employed informally, since he would then continue getting unemployment benefit until July. However, the firm did not give him his full wage due to worsening economic situation. After working there from December through February, he quitted.

Unfortunately, in the beginning of the new year the global financial crisis hit the Turkish economy. While unemployed, Mehmet took care of the construction in Çerkezköy, but became demoralized due to the impact of the crisis both in the labor and the land market of Çerkezköy. Once again, thanks to Sema, Mehmet began working in her firm as a porter in March, but he would not be able to escape the crisis. The store began downsizing soon after he landed the job. While Sema kept working there, he was sent to do the same job at another store in Beşiktaş, an upper-middle class district at the center of the city. He never liked Beşiktaş. His negative feelings toward "modern people" – implying the secular, middle- and upper classes – were reinforced during this experience. In April, his two-story apartment was finished, but it was clear that finding a buyer willing to spend the money Mehmet had in mind had become unlikely.

Sema was also dismissed in May, but having become more and more familiar with and adept at the labor market, she immediately found a position in the store of an even bigger furniture brand, Çilek, where she is still working. Sema answers the question of whether she is content with her work as follows:

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45   MASKO is the huge furniture retail and production center next to the organized industrial zone.

"What else I can do? This [Mehmet] has always been working for minimum wage, what can one do with that amount? Therefore, we are in need of [my salary]." On the other hand, when the discussion deepens, it seems she is pleased with her lastest job in comparison with the ones before: "My workplace is secure, a good one. I have a place there, just like here.[46] … Only in the mornings I tidy up, afterwards I am at my own place." In this workplace, Sema is formally employed and has never had a problem with being paid. She hopes to work there until she gains the right to retire. On the other hand, she is aware that she can be dismissed any time, as she witnessed the dismissals of several employees, including white-collar employees. Mehmet once alleged that it is easier for a woman to find a job nowadays. But he also expresses with some admiration and respect that Sema "found her place" in terms of work.

Mehmet kept working in Beşiktaş until his dismissal in June due to the downsizing in spite of the fact he did not get his payment regularly. While working in Beşiktaş and subsequently, he spent most of his free time in Çerkezköy trying to sell his apartment building, to find opportunities for future investment, and to widen his network. He was still resolved to move there and become a real estate agent. During the 2009 harvest season August, I joined Mehmet in his visit to Evci to have the chance to meet his brothers, and friends, and to observe the harvest and the village. Sema could not join us, since she had recently begun her new job.[47]

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46   We were in her kitchen during the discussion.

47   Almost all of the households in the couple's village except those holding large tracts of land seemed to be dependent to various degrees on temporal wage labor. Either the father himself or the sons in the family worked in *gurbet* temporally. For the fathers who did not have sons who were old-enough the most common option was construction. There were also cases of men going abroad for construction projects, a common and relatively good earning opportunity for workers of Turkey due to numerous Turkish construction firms operating in the Middle East and formerly communist countries. For similar commentary on "the resilience of petty commodity production, where the household income is supplemented by off-farm employment of various kinds" in Turkish villages, see Çağlar Keyder and Zafer Yenal, "Agrarian Change under Globalization: Markets and Insecurity in Turkish Agriculture," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 11, no. 1 (2011): 83.

After twenty days, with only a small amount of money earned from the hazelnut due to the combination of a poor crop and low prices, Mehmet returned to Istanbul where problems awaited him. He was again unemployed, his unemployment insurance had run out, and he was unable to find a buyer for his apartment building. That fall was very depressing for him. During that period he even became alienated from Tayyip Erdoğan, whom he had so favored that he had visited him twice when Erdoğan was imprisoned in 1999.[48] He went to Çerkezköy every time he received a call from a potential buyer, and he was desperately looking for a job. Once, he found a position as a porter in a fabric storage facility, but the job was so onerous that he did not go there the second day. Thanks to Sema, in November he worked in her store as a day laborer porter for three weeks, in December he found a job as a janitor at a newly opened, nearby mall called, a job he hated both in terms of the symbolic degradation it entailed and its exhausting nature. He had to stand up and move all day long.

The joyful, energetic, self-confident man I had met and befriended in 2007 disappeared during these months, leaving behind a melancholic one, whose self-respect was in a serious crisis. Capitalism does not hinge only on the dispossession of laboring people, but also on deprivation of their self-respect, which is granted generously to those who manage to join the ranks of the bourgeoisie or who inherited that class position. A crisis of global flows of capital resonates in the subjectivities of those like Mehmet as a crisis of self-respect, in which the worker is faced with the risk of losing the bits and pieces he has acquired. Many other workers in the neighborhood experienced months of unemployment or harsh working conditions in temporary jobs, as well. Economic crisis have a general impact on the self-respect of many workers, as Castells and Portes observed when examining the crisis at the end of the 1970s in Europe.[49]

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48   His alienation resonated with moderate discontent with the AKP at that period due to the economic crisis and the so called "Kurdish Opening."

49   Manuel Castells and Alejandro Portes, "World Underneath: The Origins, Dynamics, and Effects of the Informal Economy," in *The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries*, ed. Manuel Castells, Alejandro Portes, and Lauren A Benton (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 29.

This is a good point to give some details about the couple's relatives. Mehmet's reason for settling in the neighborhood was that his older brother, Adil, lived there and was working in the clock-trading firm, first as a janitor and later as a superintendent. Adil is one the figures I will discuss in the next chapter. Suffice it to say, the brothers get along with one another, but they do not spend much time together. The younger sister of Mehmet, Sevil also lives in İkitelli. Sevil is divorced from her husband, although not officially, and is a hard-working, single mother taking care her two sons. Mehmet and Adil support Sevil as much as they can, and she will be another character reviewed in the chapter to follow. Sevil and Sema have a good relationship and spend time together.

Sema's only relative living in Istanbul is her younger brother, Yasin, an important figure not because he is close with the couple, but because of what he represents. Yasin came to Istanbul in 1998 to stay in their house in Kıraç and to find a job in the city. He began as a garment worker, but soon he became an entrepreneur, first as a garment workshop owner, then as an informal taxi driver, and later as a truck driver. His decisive achievement was with a small workshop producing candies. From there he moved on to the booming construction sector, becaming one of the largest local construction contractors in Kıraç by the beginning of 2010s. His is a real success story indeed, making Mehmet's work performance look worse than it is. Mehmet does not hide his jealousy of his brother-in-law, who "did not have underpants on his butt when he came to Istanbul," but later became a full-scale entrepreneur.[50] Mehmet does not get along with Yasin, and I never witnessed or heard of a meeting between the two. He gets uncomfortable when Sema or his children speak of Yasin with admiration and respect.

The couple's first child, Pınar, who does not wear a headscarf, did not finish high school after spending three years in vocational school for hairdressing. She was raised in a relatively free manner, but Sema worries that she has become materialistic and immature. After she dropped out, Pınar began working irregularly in hairdresser saloons. This was indeed a tough job requiring long hours of work and she became dreaming to open her own saloon. In 2013

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50   "*Kıçında donu olmamak*" is a common idiom meaning that a person has no resources.

she married with a relatively well-off man, who works in his family jewelry shop.

The son of Mehmet and Sema, Akın is disinterested in school and lazy according to his mother. As an unsuccessful high school student and influenced by his sister, he explains his indifference by saying that he also wants to be a hairdresser and run his own salon. Later he began saying that his uncle can open a liquor store for him, as he did for his own brother.

At the beginning of January 2010, Mehmet finally managed to sell the apartment building, though for a much lower price than he prefered. He was still inclined to invest his money in land in Çerkezköy to move his original plan along, but the shrinking land market and Sema's unwillingness to move there made him change his mind. He quit his job in the mall in February, since he could not endure the job. He was again unemployed, but began to search for an apartment to buy in İkitelli and found one in March. The family was finally settled, again. In the following weeks it became clear that he had not given up on his dream. Convincing an acquintance, Bayram, to become his partner and provide most of the capital, they opened a real estate agency in the neighborhood.

Bayram has an interesting work history worth mentioning. I actually heard of Bayram before I met with him, because he was a friend of my first landlord's son, Fatih. Fatih had convinced Bayram to invest in a ponzi scheme[51] called Quest.net, a fraudulent business promising abnormal returns

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51 A Ponzi scheme is term used for a type of fraudulent business in which investors may earn abnormal returns by adding new investors to the business. The real or promised returns are not from any actual business and the resulting profit only comes from new investors, who are also become engaged because of the promise of high returns. Quest.net originated in Hong Kong, but operates worldwide from the United States to Iran, from India to Turkey. In İkitelli, I heard of and met with many people who were involved in Quest.net. To participate, one had to pay approximately $ 1,750, in return for which you receive some cheap product to legalize the deal. Afterwards, for every additional investor one recruits, the investor gets $ 200. If newcomers also convince new people to invest, the original investor gets also some returns on their new recruits, although lower. My landlord's 24 year old factory worker son was deeply involved and hopeful about the business model, once telling me "you can be the boss of those you convince to invest, since they work for you." The popularity of Quest.net among the working class that I observed in İkitelli is not exceptional. Such a significant number of people

to investors. Bayram had a career full of ups and downs. When he was working as a blue-collar worker in a unionized textile factory, he became a shop steward, but then realized that the union was "yellow" one. That upset him at first, but later he adjusted himself to the situation: he decided that it was impossible to do anything against the will of the union leadership and that after the coup of 1980, "all unions are yellow unions, anyway." Telling me all this, he turned to Mehmet and asked him in a conceited way: "Do you know what a yellow union is?" He could not wait to give the answer himself: "a capitalist union."

When his employer went bankrupt in 1999, a new entrepreneur took over the factory and his former employer suggested to the new one to employ Bayram as a white-collar officer in the human resources department whose role would be to prevent any unionization attempts. The new employer took that advice. Who would be a better union-buster than an ex-unionist? Bayram did this job well for five years, accumulating some savings which enabled him to set up a catering business in partnership with his brother-in-law. At one point they employed nearly 30 people, but ended up in bankruptcy by the end of 2008. Since then, he had not found a permanent job or set up a new business until Mehmet convinced him to open a real estate office. As his wife worked in a high-school cafeteria and earned a good wage, he was not the sole breadwinner of his household.

Mehmet's dream was realized, but as expected, it was not a magic bullet. He was finally employed by no one but himself and could benefit from his alleged entrepreneurial skills; however, it soon became clear that in an economic crisis, the real estate market in İkitelli does not offer many opportunities for those without capital. Mehmet began working with his partner Bayram in their real estate agency in April 2010. They did not do much business; during most of the work hours, especially on weekdays, they usually spent the day sitting and waiting in their office. Sema made fun of them, saying "they make

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invested in the "business" that it became an issue in the national media. The Ministry of Industry filed a criminal complaint about the business in May 2010, and the court closed down the firm in April 2011. But there are rumors and news reports that the business continues under different names.

their women work, and they just sit there the whole day."[52] Getting desperate in July, Bayram opened a small grocery store next door to their office, since he had rented both o storefronts from the owner for a good price. He tried to handle both of the stores, while Mehmet was only a partner in the real estate business. Although at certain moments Mehmet also felt pessimistic, he somehow kept his hope alive. He made himself believe that he had no other choice, because he could not find a job better than the one in the mall.

Unsurprisingly, the business and the partnership did not go well. Conflicts between the two arose more and more often and the partners broke up in April 2011. In the second half of this partnership Mehmet claimed that Bayram was not suitable for the job: "He looks down on people; he is bossing them around. A tradesman can't act like that. You have to charm people; you have to be honey-tongued." In the year of their partnership, they sold ten apartments and rented a few more. Because almost all these transactions were accomplished with the collaboration of other agents in the neighborhood, their shares of the commissions were low. The family could not have survived that year without Sema's wages.

Thanks to his "honey-tongue," Mehmet found another partner, Cengiz. Cengiz, who used to be a barber, was running an internet cafe and a real estate agency. Mehmet convinced him to work as partners in his agency, and they began working together on May 2011. But the same fate was waiting for them. Faced with limited opportunities in the real estate market of İkitelli for those without the capital to actually buy and sell real estate, the partnership did not last long. Mehmet had to resign at the beginning of 2012. After some last ditch efforts, he admitted that he would have to return to the wage labor if he wanted to earn steady money. He began working in a textile factory, a toilsome job he never liked, for a year, and in mid-2013 he found a better one as a janitor responsible for cleaning the floor, glasses and garden of the office of a nearby

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52 Wright states that by decreasing the risks of self-employment for a family, the increasing participation of married women in the labor force may lead more men to trying their luck in self-employment. Wright, *Class Counts*, 77.

construction project. The fact that it is less tiresome, less stressful, and partially outdoors made him sufficiently content to keep the job through the present.

Mehmet had bought an apartment in 2010, but before the family moved in and for some time afterwards, he renovated the interior. I later realized that this was an investment: in mid-2013, he sold the apartment for a much better price[53] due to the renovation and rising real estate prices in the neighborhood following the growth of middle class housing projects around it. With his profit and a 50,000 lira mortgage, he bought a duplex apartment on the top floors of a newly built, high quality building. That move was unexpected for me; my impression was that the family was still having a hard time recovering from Mehmet's years of self-employment. For the mortgage, the couple must pay the equivalent of one of their wages to the bank for the next six years, which worried them. But in the end, they began to live in a luxurious apartment, definitely the best I have seen in the neighborhood of those owned by workers. Moreover, it was actually another investment. It was right next to the middle-class high-rise contruction where Mehmet began working. He is sure that after the high rises are finished, he will sell the apartment for 100 thousand lira more than it cost him.

After they bought the house, Sema seemed relieved and forgave him, though not completely. Whenever she finds the opportunity, she still teases Mehmet for being lazy and untroubled: "Akın inherited his laziness from his father!" Mehmet retorts: "Yeah, right! For sure!" but later he somehow admits: "See, I may work less, but I work efficiently. For example, in this workplace, they are very content with my work." Some of his self-confidence seems to have been restored, responding to my appreciation for his new apartment by saying: "We, real estate agents, are like that. If we have money, we buy and sell and make some real profit."

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53   He bought the apartment for 75 thousand liras, spent around 15 more for renovations, and sold it for 110 thousand liras in 2013.

§ 2.3   What the Life Stories of Mehmet and Sema Uncover?

Besides providing a detailed, everyday, living portrait of a Turkish-Sunni worker, what does the life story of Mehmet reveal theoretically? I will elaborate on three issues, in other words, three different but crucial moments of working class experience: collective mobilization, proletarianization, and petty entrepreneurism. The first issue will be merely introduced to be scrutinized later in detail. But the other two will be examined in depth as two important parameters of the context of working class experience, on which following chapters will be built on. For the sake of theoretical abstraction, it is safe to argue that the experience of wage work lies temporally between proletarianization and petty entrepreneurism. The former marks the entry, while the latter represents the exit. Nonetheless, in real life neither of them is experienced in absolute terms, so they can also be experienced simultaneously with wage work.

First, Mehmet's collective class struggle experience points to the significance of Thompson's emphasis on experience, as well as of those who further develop his argument. Following Thompson's stance on class and class consciousness, Fantasia examines local clashes among two classes and "cultures of solidarity" that emerge during these struggles ethnographically.[54] He uncovers the fluid, collective, cultural, and somewhat unpredictable character of working class militancy. During the unionization campaign in which he was engaged, Mehmet experienced and learned much, transforming himself. He gained a critical perspective and a personal, but also collective, self-confidence such that he became one of the leaders of the campaign. But the expected and unexpected obstacles awaiting workers while undertaking a collective struggle prevented them from gaining a real victory.

Mehmet – to a great extent – lost his enthusiasm and hope for collective struggle, together with the momentary confidence he felt about the capabilities of the "workers' segment." In this sense, Mehmet's subjective transformation in the long run as a movement participant is not an optimistic one.

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54   Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*.

The self- or collective- "efficacy"[55] and the "class struggle consciousness"[56] he gained during the struggle did not endure after the mobilization. Nevertheless, a certain criticalness and wisdom about class relations turned him into at least a theoretical defender of class struggle. The realizations to which he came and the hopes and enthusiasms he felt during those months of mobilization are somehow alive within him in a dormant state, as I witnessed with respect to remarks he makes whenever the issue comes up. On the other hand, some of Mehmet's coworkers who experienced the same mobilization interpreted the experience positively and became even more prone to collective mobilization. I will introduce those workers in the following chapters. The traumatic failure of Mehmet's hope to rid himself of the unpleasant features of wage labor through unionizing was influential in his bold endeavor to accomplish the same thing via petty entrepreneurism. For the debate on class, the issue of subjective transformations following from movement participation is crucial but often disregarded. In brief, movement participation seems to be the only way to change people's minds about the nature of class relations and struggle. However, we know little about whether and how the well-recorded transformations during a mobilization endure afterwards. The last chapter of this dissertation is reserved to thoroughly examine this crucial issue.

2.3.1   *Proletarianization and Small Peasant Ownership Background*

Secondly, Mehmet's case represents Turkish workers' experience of proletarianization to a certain extent. While a relatively smooth process of proletarianization and lasting bonds with their villages are general features of Sunni-Turk workers, the way Mehmet was unable to hold a job and moved from one to another is probably a more pronounced feature of the neoliberal era, which brought about a general deterioration of job security.[57] I will elaborate on

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55   Linda Markowitz, "After the Organizing Ends: Workers, Self-Efficacy, Activism, and Union Frameworks," *Social Problems* 45, no. 3 (1988).

56   Rachel E Meyer, "Perpetual Struggle: Sources of Working-Class Identity and Activism in Collective Action" (The University of Michigan, 2008).

57   Metin Özuğurlu, "Tekel Direnişi: Sınıflar Mücadelesi Üzerine Anımsamalar," in *Tekel Direnişinin Işığında Gelenekselden Yeniye Işç Sınıfı Hareketi*, ed. Çağrı Kaderoğlu Bulut (Ankara: Notabene, 2011).

Turkish proletarianization with a macro-level comparative approach to artic-
ulate its impact in a more delicate way.

Due to the political agency of the Ottoman state (and later the Turkish
Republic) and the land-labor ratio, Anatolia has been largely a land of petty
producer farmers, and the process of the proletarianization of these farmers
has been relatively smooth. This legacy has somehow survived two centuries
of modernization and commodification, and has softened class tensions in
Turkey.[58] Among other Ottoman historians, Quataert underscores the im-
portance and impact of this phenomenon.[59] Pamuk elaborates the differentia-
tion among peripheral countries. Unlike other colonized or dependent coun-
tries, in the only three peripheral countries which did not totally lose their
political independence – Ottoman, Chinese and Persian empires – the politi-
cal power of large land-owners remained limited in the nineteenth century.[60]
Providing a comparison of the rural land structure of Middle Eastern coun-
tries, Beinin shows that rural land distribution in Turkey is by far the most
egalitarian of the region.[61] But Keyder best articulates this important insight.[62]
Together with Yenal, he recently noted that although conditions are less secure
and income is being "supplemented by off-farm employment of various

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58 The major exception to this generalization is the Kurdish region, especially Urfa and Diyar-
bakır, where landless peasants constitute a significant social phenomenon. See Çınar, *Öteki
Proletarya: De-Proletarizasyon Ve Mevsimlik Tarım İşçiler*, 59. Another exceptional group is
again constituted by Kurds. Not due to local rural class relations but rather due to forced mi-
gration imposed by the Turkish state during the civil war of the 1990's, hundreds of thousands
of Kurds lost their lands, becoming dispossessed and proletarianized. See Deniz Yükseker,
"Neoliberal Restructuring and Social Exclusion in Turkey," in *Turkey and the Global Economy*,
ed. Ziya Öniş and Fikret Şenses (New York: Routledge, 2009).

59 Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
2005), 133 and 200.

60 Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı-Türkiye Iktisad Tarihi 1500-1914* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007),
196-97.

61 Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2001), 118 and 22.

62 Çağlar Keyder, "Small Peasant Ownership in Turkey: Historical Formation and Present
Structure," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 7, no. 1 (1983); *State and Class in Turkey* (London:
Verso, 1987); *Ulusal Kalkınmacılığın Iflas* (Istanbul: Metis, 2004), 75-86.

kinds," the petty commodity production in Turkish agriculture by "heavily labour-intensive family farms" survives and will most likely persist.[63]

Looking closer at a comparative case, Beinin and Lockman demonstrate that "by 1907, over 90 percent of Egypt's 1.6 million rural families owned too little land for even subsistence, or no land at all."[64] The agrarian reform programs enacted from the 1950s to 1970 were rolled back in a heavy-handed way, leading to reconcentration since the 1970s.[65] Comparing the processes of proletarianization in Egypt and Turkey Öncü states that while in Egypt the rural exodus began in the interwar years and its agents were the "landless, destitute fellahin," the same process in Turkey began in the 1950s as a migration of small peasants.[66] The concentrated pattern of land-ownership and the power of land-owning oligarchies in Latin America has been underscored.[67] For example, Diane states that compared even to countries on the continent, Argentina "stands out in terms of the political and economic dominance of its large landlords within country's rural class structure."[68]

In a similar vein, Koo explains that South Korean proletarianization was a "large-scale rural exodus,"[69] which was "swifter, more abrupt, and more intense" even compared to Europe's.[70] The South Korean rural-to-urban mi-

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63   Keyder and Yenal, "Agrarian Change under Globalization: Markets and Insecurity in Turkish Agriculture."

64   Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 162-64.

65   Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*.

66   Ayse Öncü, "Street Politics," in *Developmentalism and Beyond: Society and Politics in Egypt and Turkey* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1994).

67   George Philip, "Commodities in Latin America," in *South America, Central America and Caribbean 2002*, ed. Jaqueline West (London: Europa Publications, 2001), 26; Elisa Wiener Bravo, *The Concentration of Land Ownership in Latin America: An Approach to Current Problems* (Rome: The International Land Coalition, 2011).

68   Davis, *Discipline and Development: Middle Classes and Prosperity in East Asia and Latin America*, 161.

69   Hagen Koo, "From Farm to Factory: Proletarianization in Korea," *American Sociological Review* 55, no. 5 (1990): 673.

70   Ibid., 669.

grants "were most likely to be permanent migrants with no intention of returning to rural areas."[71] The "South(ern) African experience," likewise provides another extreme case of accumulation by dispossession and proletarianization.[72] Koo mentions the swift proletarianization in South Korea as one of the reasons for labor militancy,[73] and Hart makes the same argument for South Africa.[74] Davis brilliantly compares the two extreme cases of Argentina and Taiwan in terms of their processes of proletarianization. In Taiwan, agricultural producers stayed put, invested, and expanded, while South Korea stands in the middle of the two extremes.[75] Davis relates that the militancy of Korean and Argentinian labor, on the one hand, and the relative passivity of Taiwanese labor, on the other, is the result of these differences.[76]

As Gürel reminds us even in Western Europe there were countries where proletarianization did not follow the harsh English path. Semi-proletarianization is not peculiar to Turkey, but is also experienced in other peripheral countries,[77] of which China and Taiwan are well-recorded examples. Nevertheless, as the literature review above reveals, the multiplicity of proletarianization processes cannot be reduced to two (abrupt vis-a-vis semi-proletarianization); it is a spectrum. Among these gradations, Turkey stands close to an extreme end, probably before Taiwan and somewhere close to China.[78]

Although this debate might seem outdated in the Turkish context, I argue it is not. In a much-praised book, Lee mainly asserts that Chinese workers are

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71 *Korean Workers* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 17.

72 Giovanni Arrighi, Nicole Aschoff, and Ben Scully, "Accumulation by Dispossession and Its Limits: The Southern Africa Paradigm Revisited," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 45, no. 4 (2010).

73 Koo, *Korean Workers*, 16-17.

74 Gillian Patricia Hart, *Disabling Globalization: Places of Power in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, vol. 10 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 224.

75 Davis, *Discipline and Development: Middle Classes and Prosperity in East Asia and Latin America*, 159.

76 Ibid., 228-44.

77 Gürel, "Agrarian Change and Labour Supply in Turkey, 1950–1980."

78 Greece would be another country in this cluster with a large self-employed population, accounting for 35 percent of the employed population. See "Self-employment % of civilian employment," OECD Stats, accessed January 26, 2016, http://stats.oecd.org/.

conditioned not to become more militant because of the "migrants' right to agricultural land" and persistent relations with "the rural household economy," which "compel migrants' double existence as both farmers and workers."[79] Their land rights serve as a buffer, providing "a floor of subsistence" during the times of crises;[80] thus, "land functions as informal social insurance."[81] There is "symbiotic relationship between waged work in the city and income from farming."[82] These are indeed very familiar observations for Turkish students of labor, long appreciated in the Turkish context. On the other hand, we should not forget the distinctiveness of China's experience, which explains the resilience of family farms: namely a communist revolution of peasants.

The buffering function of the Turkish rural land ownership structure may be even stronger than in China, because Lee states that rural residents' "political subordination to a predatory regime of local government" significantly lowers the quality of life in the countryside functioning as a strong push factor in China.[83] This is in contrast with Keyder and Yenal's recent observation that the push factors in rural Turkey has been decreasing due to the modernization of villages.[84] Accordingly, during the last two crises of the Turkish economy in 2001 and 2009 – where Gross Domestic Product fell 6 and 5 percent, respectively – the agricultural sector proved that its capacity to serve as insurance was intact, if to a limited extent. While the share of agricultural employment has been steadily declining since the 1950s, in 2001, 2009, and 2010 it grew by 1.6, 0.7, and 0.2 percent respectively. It also stood steady in 2011.[85] In the field, I heard of and witnessed many people heading back to their villages to stay for

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79   Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*, 205.

80   Ibid.

81   Ibid., 209.

82   Ibid., 210.

83   Ibid., 217.

84   Çağlar Keyder and Zafer Yenal, *Bildiğimiz Tarımın Sonu: Küresel İktida Ve Köylülük* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013), 186.

85   TÜİK, "İstihdam Edilenlerin Yıllar ve Cinsiyete Göre İktisadi Faaliyet Kolları," accessed December 8, 2015, http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1007.

time enough to bind up the wounds of a familial economic crisis caused by unemployment or a failed attempt at petty entrepreneurism.

Thompson notably remarked that the proletarianization of English workers was not a process imposed upon raw material:

> The changing productive relations and working conditions of the Industrial Revolution were imposed, not upon raw material, but upon the free-born Englishman – and the free-born Englishman as Paine had left him or as the Methodists had moulded him.[86]

In resonance with Thompson's "free-born Englishman" and to capture the strong small-peasant background of Turkish working class, we can speak of "the independent-producer Turkishman"[87] upon, whom proletarianization has been imposed. This is another way to label "small producer subjectivity (with roots in the Ottoman past)" observed by Tugal among the "subproletarians" of Sultanbeyli, who were heavily influenced by Islamism.[88] "Independent-producer Turkishman" implies the relatively greater tendency towards petty entrepreneurism than customary under the more dependent and oppressive work regimes of pre-modern agricultural production.[89] Its other subjective implication would be the relatively stronger resentment toward and irritation with wage-labor as expressed in the term "el işi."

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86 Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 194.

87 I am aware that the nature of the two terms are different: the first one is a political discourse of agitation, while the second is a structural heritage. The first was articulated at the end of eighteen century in England by intellectuals and was promptly embraced by the English working classes. The people regard themselves as such, which has led the concept to become something more than an abstract notion, rather a politically powerful identity. On the other hand, "the independent-producer Turkishman" is a term referring to a structural, political-economic condition. Although there have been some attempts, the phrase was neither articulated nor popularized like "the free-born Englishman." However, this does not lessen its impact on the subjectivities of Turkish workers.

88 Tugal, ""Serbest Meslek Sahibi": Neoliberal Subjectivity among İstanbul' Popular Sectors," 66.

89 As an example, in their article on the genealogy of dependency Fraser and Gordon discuss the preindustrial condition of England and the United States as follows: "To be dependent, in contrast, was to gain one's livelihood by working for someone else. This of course was the condition of most people, of wage laborers as well as serfs and slaves, of most men as well as

The crucial point is that – as with all kinds of structural parameters – it influences but does not determine Turkish working class' disposition to rarely need or employ militancy, when compared to other parts of the world with different heritages. By building on the existing literature, I will show that the degradation of living and working conditions – that is to say, material factors – cannot explain working class militancy. Resistance and mobilization have never been automatic reactions applied when there is no alternative, but rather they are subjective preferences chosen from among other alternatives. Recalling the two greatest working-class upheavals, which shook the regimes of developed, capitalist Germany and France in 1918 and 1968, respectively, would suffice. Although the first case can be accounted for by the degradation of living conditions to a certain extent, the second, which occurred at the peak of the Keynesian welfare state, cannot. Structural advantages can pacify as well as empower resistance. Meyer articulates that there is probably "something of a U-shaped curve with respect to the relationship between deprivation and protest."[90] Agency and politics shape which reaction will emerge.

If radicals exaggerate the militancy of the Turkish working class in the 1960s and 1970s, Keyder bent the stick too far the other way by relying mainly on this semi-proletarianization thesis. The buffer provided by a rural network indeed reduces the cost of compliance; Turkish workers can clearly survive even if they do not mobilize against the bourgeoisie. This only makes Turkish workers' resistance and mobilization even more *subjective* compared with other contexts, which are closer to the abstract and extreme situation, wherein people have to mobilize even for mere survival. As even basic quantitative data on the incidence of strikes, on union density, and average wages reveal,[91] a significant number of Turkish workers embraced that kind of subjectivity from the beginning of the 1960s to the mid-1990s. One day they may adopt it again, no matter what kind of buffers they enjoy.

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most women." See Fraser and Gordon, "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the Us Welfare State," 313.

90   Meyer, "Perpetual Struggle: Sources of Working-Class Identity and Activism in Collective Action," 85.

91   Alpkan Birelma, "Türkiye'de Taşeron Çalışma," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 133 (2015): 68-73.

2.3.2 *Entrepreneurism*

The third point concerns petty entrepreneurism. Mehmet's non-wage incomes hint at an argument made by Wallerstein and Smith that even the working-class households, wages are not the main income. There are four other forms: "market sales (or profit), rent, transfer, and subsistence (or direct labor input)."[92] While he was a full-time worker, Mehmet continued earning profits from his land back in the village, from small trade in which he engaged while working at the garage, and finally via more profitable transactions in the real estate market. These experiences, but especially the last, partially explain Mehmet's desire and nerve hile rallying to become a real estate agent.

As I realized after many years of research among the working class, petty entrepreneurism is a key to understand the charm of capitalism among the working class. If one sticks to an orthodox Marxian understanding of class, it is possible to ignore both aspirational and actual entrepreneurism among the working class by deflecting the issue. More plausibly, it is recognized but dismissed as marginal; however, it is not so easy to prove this claim. Once one is curious and specifically look for it, it seems almost ubiquitous. We know that in non-agricultural employment, the share of employers in Turkey has slowly reduced from around 7 to 5.5 percent since 2002, while the share of self-employment has decreased sharply from around 15 to 11 percent over the same period.[93] Even though the trend is downwards, total 16.5 percent is not insignificant. Furthermore, to appreciate the significance of self-employment, it is not sufficient to look only at the percentage of the self-employed at a certain time.

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92   Joan Smith and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Creating and Transforming Households* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 7-10.

93   Only 8 percent of employers and 19 percent of self-employment in non-agricultural sectors are women. See "İstihdam edilenlerin yıllar ve cinsiyete göre işteki durumu," TURKSTAT, accessed January 10, 2016, http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1007. On the other hand, a little more than half of the self-employed in non-agricultural sectors are working informally in 2014. "Esas İşlerinden Dolayı Herhangi Bir Sosyal Güvenlik Kuruluşuna Kayıtlı Olmayanların Yıllar ve Cinsiyete Göre İşteki Durumu," TURKSTAT, accessed December 11, 2015, http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1007.

Petty entrepreneurism as a second job – undertaken simultaneously with wage labor – is another thing to add to the picture. But most important is the percentage of people who have at least once experience self-employment in their work lives. In the field, I realized that past self-employment experience is unexceptional among middle-aged, male workers.[94] The entrepreneurial spirit and the charm of capitalism is actually practiced by many more people than those who are involved at any given moment.

Entrepreneurism and its impact on workers' subjectivities was totally ignored in the great work of Sennett and Cobb. I observed that the most common hidden injury of workers in İkitelli was their self-accusation for not managing to become an entrepreneur.[95] Those who took a chance and failed often feel this in an even more pronounced way.[96] Moreover, it is important to note that the failure of these small enterprises does not have to be dramatic or destructive, as Mehmet's case reveals.

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94 Among people with whom I had a close contact in my fieldwork, 33 were male, middle-aged heads of households, employed as workers for at least some time during my field work. I witnessed six of them become self-employed, while two failed and returned to wage work. Mehmet was one of the latter. Another 6 of these 33 men reported that they had had a self-employment experience in the past.

95 Probably due to their Marxian understanding of class at that time, which assumes ignorable permeability between classes, Sennett and Cobb neglect upward mobility via entrepreneurism focusing instead on upward mobility via education or hard work to better jobs, such as a transition from manual to white collar or professional wage work. See Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, 173, 228 and 49. That being said, I am aware that capitalism is not homogenous and that the Turkish context probably allows more upward mobility than the United States, and it is therefore easier to appreciate the significance of upward mobility due to entrepreneurism. However, Wright – as I will cite below – points to the same significance in American capitalism.

96 This is not absolute, though. The revolutionary worker leader, Mesut, whose story I will present in the last chapter, also had a two-year long experience with entrepreneurism. With a partner he built and ran a knitting workshop, but the enterprise was later bankrupted. Mesut did not get deeper injuries from this experience, but he might be an exception due to his strong allegiance to socialist ideology.

Thirty years after Sennett and Cobb, Wright writes that while self-employment is a central part of American life, it has been the recipient of little systematic, empirical study by sociologists.[97] He cites data that shows that self-employment in the United States decreased until the 1970s, but slightly increased thereafter. He investigates whether this expansion was due to the rise of post-industrial sectors, but concluded that expansion within manufacturing was a significant factor and correlated this with post-Fordism and the expansion of subcontracting.[98] By identifying the significance of past self-employment, he points out that during the 1980s "at least a quarter of the labor force and a third of the male labor force either is or has been self-employed." Moreover, considering those who had a self-employed parent, spouse or close friend, he shows that "two-thirds of Americans in the labor force have some direct personal linkage to self-employment."[99] This data is not outdated, as revealed by Kim and his colleges, who assert that 8 percent of the labor force are self-employed in the 2010s, and "40 percent of U.S. adults experience a spell of self-employment throughout their lifetime."[100]

Drawing on international research, Wright reveals that the ratio of those who have some direct personal link to self-employment is even higher in Japan: some 68 percent. The ratio is lower, but still significant, at about 55 percent in Sweden, Norway and Canada.[101] In the same vein as his argument about self-employment, Wright remarks that the issue of social mobility has been "largely neglected within the Marxist tradition of class analysis."[102] He concludes:

> The patterns of class-boundary permeability which we have explored indicate that this issue needs to be taken seriously within Marxist class

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97   Wright, *Class Counts*, 68.

98   Ibid., 75 and 78.

99   Ibid., 68.

100   Kim, Longest, and Aldrich, "Can You Lend Me a Hand? Task-Role Alignment of Social Support for Aspiring Business Owners," 214.

101   Wright, *Class Counts*, 68.

102   Ibid., 265.

analysis. The results suggest that the durability of capitalism in the developed capitalist societies is probably not simply due to its capacity to generate growth and affluence for a substantial proportion of their populations, but also because of the extent to which individual lives and interactions cross the salient divisions within the class structure. … The relative frequency of cross-class experiences would be expected to dilute class identity.[103]

Self-employment is actually an umbrella term covering at least three different situations as Koo and Boratav conceptualized in the same way for South Korea and Turkey, respectively: at the bottom are petty traders, market traders, peddlers, street vendors, and personal service providers. Many of them experience even worse conditions compared with employees working in manual labor. In the middle are owners of small businesses, and at the top are self-employed professionals.[104] As surveys of entrepreneurs disclose, necessity can be a significant driver of entrepreneurism, especially in emerging economies.[105] However, to count on entrepreneurs self- declarations might exaggerate the significance of necessity. Indeed, Mehmet legitimized his enterprise by claiming that there were no jobs for him.[106] That being said, we should not ignore cases of self-employment where there is no choice involved, only necessity. Those

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103   Ibid., 265-66.

104   Hagen Koo, "Small Entrepreneurship in a Developing Society: Patterns of Labor Absorption and Social Mobility," *Social Forces* 54, no. 4 (1976); Boratav, *Istanbu Ve Anadolu'dan Sınıf Profilleri*, 24.

105   The share of Turkish entrepreneurs who gave necessity as their reason was 34 percent in 2012, which ranks twenty-seventh in a list of thirty-three OECD countries and few developing ones such as India and China. Other reasons declared by Turkish respondents included the following: opportunity, 38 percent; family business, 22 percent; do not know, 6 percent. See OECD, *Entrepreneurship at a Glance* (OECD Publishing, 2014), 88-89.

106   Wright underscores the same point: "Many people may therefore enter self-employment because of the absence of good job alternatives, not simply because of the absence of jobs as such." See Wright, *Class Counts*, 77.

who cannot become wage workers for different reasons such as racial discrimination may be counted among the self-employed in the statistics.[107]

Entrepreneurship serves different purposes as Lee illustrates in the Chinese case: as extra income for some, a buffer for others, as a means to actualize upward mobility for a lucky minority, or as mere aspiration, keeping individual hopes and the legitimacy of capitalism alive.[108] Working class aspirations for entrepreneurism differ among different cultures; Lamont notes that unlike American workers, "few Frenchmen dream of becoming entrepreneurs or of joining the upper half."[109] Beizing and her colleges show that the motivations behind enterpreneurism are are not solely economic, but also intrinsic: a "desire for flexibility and work freedom."[110] Kasmir quotes Milkman to relate the story of workers, who accepted the buyout of their plant and opened small businesses afterwards. In this way, "they earned less than they did in the plant, but they derived more personal satisfaction from their labor."[111] Lubeck similarly points out that for Nigerian Muslim workers accepting wage labor means "to give up the independence and freedom that workers formerly enjoyed as craftsmen, traders, peasant farmers or mallams."[112]

There have been two important researches made in Istanbul that provide hard data on upward mobility via entrepreneurism. In a survey conducted in 1991 in two districts inhabited mostly by "popular sectors," Boratav discovered that 63 percent of the entrepreneurs who employed three or more workers

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107 Romas would be a good example in the Turkish context. See Başak Ekim Akkan, Mehmet Baki Deniz, and Mehmet Ertan, *Sosyal Dışlanmanın Roman Halleri* (Istanbul: EDROM, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi SPF, Anadolu Kültür, 2011).

108 Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*, 225 and 28-31.

109 Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*, 227.

110 Cynthia Benzing, Hung Manh Chu, and Orhan Kara, "Entrepreneurs in Turkey: A Factor Analysis of Motivations, Success Factors, and Problems," *Journal of small business management* 47, no. 1 (2009): 70.

111 Kasmir, "Activism and Class Identity and at the Saturn Automobile Factory," 90.

112 Lubeck, *Islam and Urban Labor in Northern Nigeria: The Making of a Muslim Working Class*, 201.

were blue collar or unskilled service workers in their first jobs in Istanbul.[113] This makes clear why people in İkitelli unanimously claim that almost all of the employers living in the neighborhood used to be workers. The working-class majority in İkitelli is greater with respect to the districts where Boratav conducted his survey. Among other things, Boratav explains the high social mobility with urban rent. In research completed in the mid-1990s, Erder found similar results in another borough of Istanbul. She classified the self-employed and employers as one group excluding irregularly and temporarily self-employed such as street hawkers. 29 percent of this group began their urban careers as manual workers in regular jobs, while 57 percent of them began in irregular and temporary jobs.[114] Erder concludes that the most significant tendency detected is a transition from wage and irregular employment to establishing one's own business.[115] Erder explains this with municipal politics and high level of informality in the urban economy, which favor petty entrepreneurism.[116]

In both Boratav and Erder's data, there is an interesting common point that the authors themselves did not emphasize. Irregular, self-employed jobs (like street hawking) seem to offer less compared to manual wage work in terms of immediate returns. However, compared to manual wage work, they offer a significantly greater chance at upward mobility into the ranks of bourgeoisie.

Geniş points out that among his sample of workers employed in small firms in Ankara, half of the blue collar workers reported that they want to establish their own businesses. Almost three-quarters of them dream that

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113   The rest began their work lives as self-employed, as employers, or as professional (college-educated) wage earner. For the "petty employers" who employ just one or two permanent workers, the same percentage is 64, while for the self-employed it is 76. See Boratav, *Istanbu Ve Anadolu'dan Sınıf Profilleri*, 57.

114   Calculated from the table in Erder, *Istanbul'd Bir Kent Kondu: Ümraniye*, 211. Erder also produced data that imply the moderation of downward mobility. Only 6 percent of the group is comprised of regular manual workers, and those working in irregular, temporary jobs began their urban careers as self-employed or as employers.

115   Ibid., 212.

116   Ibid., 144, 59 and 302.

their children will have small businesses instead of being workers. Geniş also relates this with the rural petty-producer background of these mostly migrant workers.[117] On the other hand, the white collar workers he surveyed, tellingly reported that they want their children to be professional employees instead of petty-entrepreneurs.[118]

Tugal captures the prevalence of entrepreneurism among "subproletarians" (mostly informal workers with irregular wages and very precarious employment) in yet another district of Istanbul. He asks whether there are "traces of small producer ideology even among the proletariat?"[119] Drawing on the few formal sector workers with whom he interacted, he suggests they were least influenced by small-producer ideology.[120] As demonstrated, a small-producer ideology among the working class is actually observable in considerable levels in many countries, whether at the core or at periphery, precisely because upward mobility via entrepreneurism is also present at a considerable level. In his article, Tugal scrutinizes the small-producer ideology in a localized way and does not bring the state of entrepreneurism in any other country into the debate. While Turkey may be close to one extreme in a gradational scale of entrepreneurism among working classes of various nations, Tugal discusses it almost as an authentic anomaly of religious subproletarians of Turkey.

Although it would be difficult to exactly measure, entrepreneurism might be more prevalent among Tugal's subproletariat compared to regular workers of İkitelli, but the difference seems not as great as he suggests. I argue that although it is variegated in different cultures, in different sections of working class and in different times, working class entrepreneurship has always been there, but critical researchers studying working classes turned a blind eye on

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117   Arif Geniş, *İşç Sınıfının Kıyısında* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2006), 180-82.

118   It seems that in general there is an inverse relationship between education and entrepreneurism, probably because the opportunity cost of entrepreneurism is higher for those with better education. My uncle, who became an employer of more than couple of hundred people, is an engineer graduated from Yıldız University, which is a good one, but not among the best three universities. He keeps saying that engineers from Boğaziçi University, one of the top, mostly end up being employees, while those from Yıldız mostly become entrepreneurs.

119   Tugal, ""Serbest Meslek Sahibi": Neoliberal Subjectivity among Istanbul' Popular Sectors," 79.

120   Ibid., 80.

it or focused to prove its marginality. Therefore, the first reaction of researchers, who recognize its prevalence in their field, seems to be an assumption of that this prevalence should be peculiar to their locality or group. Lee's Chinese workers, Wright's American workers or Davis' Taiwanese workers[121] do not seem less entrepreneurial than Tugal's subproletariat.

As Sennett and Cobb crucially reveal "workingmen intellectually reject the idea that endless opportunity exists for the competent," nevertheless "the institutions of class force them to apply the idea to themselves: If I don't escape being part of the woodwork, it's because I didn't develop my powers enough." Most workers have hidden injuries of class which make them blame themselves for their class position by implanting an idea they cannot get rid of: "I should have made more of myself." Thus, "challenging class institutions becomes saddled with the agonizing question, who am I to make the challenge?"[122] Sennett and Cobb expose "a secret self-accusation" is implanted in those, who did not "come off as well," since class differences appear "as questions of character, of moral resolve, will, and competence."[123] This loss of belief in their own dignity[124] is a major mechanism, which legitimizes capitalism. Sennett and Cobb have ignored entrepreneurism and focused on the upward mobility from manual to white-collar and professional wage work.

I argue that the mechanism that implants this secret self-accusation into Turkish workers rests not-only-but-mainly on the upwardly mobiles thanks to entrepreneurism. And this is most likely not unique to Turkey. It seems to me that for the working class, upward mobility via entrepreneurism seems more possible compared to mobility via education. Therefore, the most crucial im-

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121   For example, a passage on Taiwanese workers suggests: "In Taiwan, this interactive dynamic between family forms of ownership and small firm size, combined with the spatial integration that diminishes a rural urban divide and brings farmers into the city, diminished the likelihood of strong working-class identities and sustained a vibrant entrepreneurial economy built on a disciplinary, quasi-rural middle-class ethos." See Davis, *Discipline and Development: Middle Classes and Prosperity in East Asia and Latin America*, 233.

122   Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, 251.

123   Ibid., 256.

124   Ibid., 37.

pact of petty entrepreneurism is the way it actually serves as a means for upward mobility for a lucky minority, simultaneously deepening and reinforcing secret self-accusations among the rest. Tugal also captures this among subproletarians "who had not been able to become small businessmen, mostly blamed their own lack of education and laziness, or even stupidity and inability to seize opportunities."[125] Those who witnessed people of a similar background turn into entrepreneurs and later employers are even more vulnerable to that kind of self-accusation. Such self-accusation also brings about respect for employers, and those, who themselves tried but failed are probably even more vulnerable. Once you play the game, the rules of the game seem more self-evident and legitimate.

To clarify how petty entrepreneurism exacerbates workers' hidden injuries, a conversation with another neighborhood man, Muzaffer, who will appear further in the next chapter, is revealing. In an evening chat walking along the street, Muzaffer informed me about the families living in his street who come from his village. He mentioned the story of a man who became a businessman running a workshop of around 50 employees. As he got more wealthy, he moved from the neighborhood, but kept returning to the same coffeehouse in the neighborhood to play cards with his relatives and countrymen. I asked about the details of his upward mobility to understand if he had any explicit advantage to begin with, such as capital brought from the village. Muzaffer replied: "No, he started from zero." After a short and irritating silence, the sad man added: "Unfortunately." Muzaffer was not at odds with the man. His "unfortunately" was a succinct way to suggest how this success story makes him feel. Muzaffer is an exemplary case of a deeply injured worker as will become clear in the next chapter.

Even though in Turkey the hegemony of liberalism and therefore the hidden injuries of workers are probably not as deep as in the United States, there has been definitely a serious "improvement" achieved after two centuries of "modernization." As in many other contexts, for a Turkish worker "to make more of himself" is not-only-but-most accomplished through petty-entrepreneurism. I discussed above the heritage of the "independent-producer Turkishman," namely Turkish workers' rural backgrounds and the fact they often

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125   Tugal, ""Serbest Meslek Sahibi": Neoliberal Subjectivity among İstanbul' Popular Sectors," 82.

come from self-employed farming households. In a context where liberalism thrives and deepens both the level of ideas and the economy, workers witness that some among them rise up via entrepreneurism, while others cannot. This makes it look like inner, individual merit is allowing these emergent entrepreneurs to move upwards, a merit the rest feel they lack and for which they blame themselves.

Mustafa is no exception and has both his share of such hidden injuries and his aspirations for petty entrepreneurism. As an ambitious man, he believed that he has trading skills. He wanted to be rid of wage labor and its stigma, but also to be rid of self-accusation of being incompetent. He witnessed many like him manage to become entrepreneurs and climb up the iron hierarchy of capitalism. His brother-in-law, who "did not have underpants on his butt when he came to Istanbul," as he often repeats achieved just this. Several of his friends achieved this, but he has been stuck with "*el işi*," which nowadays offers only minimum wage for a man with his skills. To defend his dignity and expand his lot, he fought hard for unionization when he found himself in the middle of such a campaign, but he suffered harshly the difficulty of achieving this under the conditions of neoliberalism. Mustafa took his chance to become an entrepreneur not only to make more money, but also to ease his hidden injuries and to prove he has as much dignity as the winners in the sad game of capitalism.

§ 2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented introductory information about the neighborhood and its residents. I briefly presented the neighborhood's history which began with a working-class migration in the mid-1970s. The destiny of the region changed when the Trans-European Motorway and later an organized industrial zone were built adjacent the neighborhood in the second half of the 1980s. The 1990s were characterized by a massive migration and urbanization, which turned the 2.5 square kilometer area into a neighborhood inhabited by some 100 thousand people by the 2010s. Three main communities are discernable within this population: Turkish Sunnis prominently from the Black Sea region, Alevis mainly from Tokat, and Kurds. Residents of the neighborhood are

predominantly working-class, even if working class is defined in a restricted way as manual workers and their families.

As an introduction to the subjective account of being a worker in İkitelli, I discussed popular terms and phrases that clue us into how workers themselves perceive being a worker. "El işi", which means "stranger's business" is one commonly used to indicate wage work. I argued that in a social environment where most people come from rural households doing family farming, the urban economy enables many workers to undertake self-employment; wage work does not seem given. Thus "el işi" entails a popular resentment towards and non-identification with wage labor in a social milieu where self-employment seems reachable.

Then, I narrated the life story of a male worker, concentrating on his last nine years, which I witnessed. His life story is not necessarily representative but revealing due to two experiences he lived through. The first was his involvement as a leading figure in a unionization struggle, and the second was his attempt of entrepreneurism as a real estate agent. Moreover, I presented his rural-to-urban migration and proletarianization as representative especially for Turkish Sunni workers. In the last section I elaborated on these three issues.
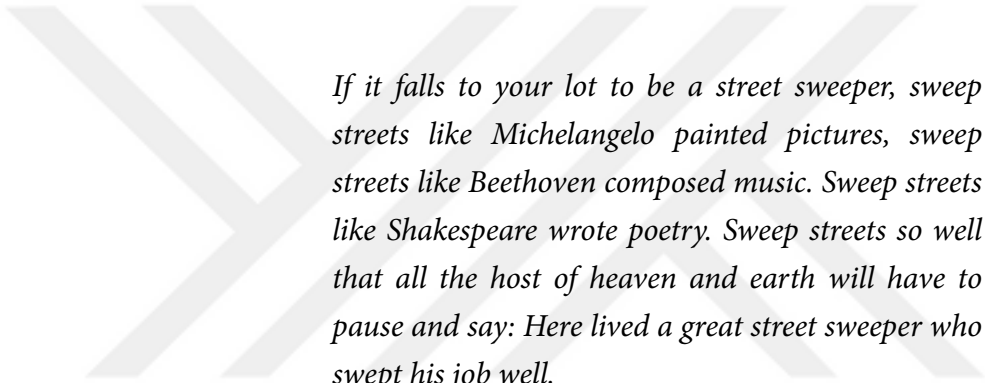
During the unionization campaign, Mehmet transformed tremendously due to his experiences. But the obstacles that awaited the workers in their collective struggle prevented them from succeeding. As a result, he largely lost his enthusiasm for collective class struggle. His subjective transformation during the mobilization mostly regressed, although the realizations he had come to still reveal themselves in some remarks he makes occasionally. After brief discussion, I put aside the crucial issue of subjective transformation resulting from participation in a movement to the last chapter.

As for the issue of proletarianization, I reviewed the international literature and argued that the multiplicity of proletarianization processes cannot be reduced to its extremes, namely abrupt vis-a-vis semi-proletarianization; but it is a specturum. Among the gradations, Turkey lies close to the semi-proletarianization end, together with countries such as Taiwan and China. To capture this strong small-peasant background of the Turkish working class I proposed a term. While Thompson argued that the English working class made itself on the basis of the "free-born Englishman," I assert that the basis on

which Turkish working class subjectivity built may be best captured by the "independent-producer Turkishman." However, in contrast with most supporters of the significance of semi-proletarianization, I contend that the buffer of rural property ownership does not automatically moderate working-class militancy. First, there is probably a U-shaped curve with respect to the relationship between deprivation and protest. And second, working-class collective resistance arises from subjective reasons as much as objective ones, as I will demonstrate in the third and fourth chapters.

As for petty entrepreneurism, I claimed that it is arguably the major key for understanding the hegemony of capitalism among the working class. Entrepreneurism among the working class is a reality of daily life that is difficult to dismiss as marginal. Its effects on subjectivities are even more significant than its actual prevalence. Sennett and Cobb's otherwise distinguished work is an example of the neglect of working-class entrepreneurism. I assert that among the most common hidden injury of workers in İkitelli is their self-accusations for not becoming entrepreneurs. Using available data from different countries, I showed that entrepreneurism and its aspiration among the working class is considerable in many countries. It is not an anomaly particular to some localities, but a subjective reflection on a structural feature of capitalism. Differences in entrepreneurism between different locations, times, or sections of the working class seem to be quantitative rather than qualitative. To measure levels of actual entrepreneurism among the working classes of different countries comparatively is not easy, but the limited data suggest that Turkey is among countries with the highest levels.

3

The Meaning of Work

If it falls to your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music. Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well.

– Martin Luther King

If most orthodox literature … ignores or marginalises the conflict between capital and labour, most Marxist literature perceives nothing else.

– Richard Hyman

The amount of time alone that the average citizen is expected to devote to work – particularly when we include the time spent training, searching, and preparing for work, not to mention recovering from it – would suggest that the experience warrants more consideration.

– Kathi Weeks

The 'work ethic' holds that labor is good in itself; that a man or woman becomes a better person by virtue of the act of working. America's competitive spirit, the 'work ethic' of this people, is alive and well on Labor Day, 1971.

– Richard Nixon

From each according to his ability…

– Louis Blanc

I heard the words of King above from a speaker at a crowded workers' meeting in Pittsburgh, organized by a union to mobilize hundreds of service workers and acquire support for a nation-wide campaign for higher minimum wages. The speaker quoted King and then expounded on King's words, concluding: "No work is insignificant!" This moment was one of the most intense of this three-hour event stimulating all of the audience. The workers around me – mostly black, mostly janitors – responded boisterously with a cheerful pride: "Yeah!" "That's right!" "Exactly!" I was thousands of miles away from the workers I study and had befriended, but class was at work in much the same ways, creating similar relations and subjectivities.

As a legendary fighter for freedom and social justice, King was declaring that manual jobs and workers deserve as much respect as the intellectual and even artistic ones. Beyond the issue of respect, which might easily turn into lip service, he also attaches the same positive meanings to manual jobs that

are enjoyed by artistic ones. Moreover, we know that King's struggle was for the transformation not only of meanings, but also of material relations: processes which need on another to advance. This cry for meaning and respect and the implication of changing their reality was the reason for the audience's enthusiastic applause.

Nixon's flattering of work ethic – ostensibly similar words to King's – carries a contrary, liberal conservative meaning: a call for workers to consent to and even actively participate in their own exploitation. Nixon's words uncover a problem – some danger – in King's line of thought: an aspect that might become "a tool of the ruling classes."[1] In light of this tension, in this chapter I scrutinize the question of the meaning of work by investigating the meanings that workers in İkitelli attach to work, in general, and to their immediate jobs, in particular.[2] My goal is to give a consideration of work experience that it deserves without reducing it to class struggle. Although class struggle inevitably leaves a mark on all of the meanings attached to work, these entail more than just being a principal arena for class struggle.

I will explore not only general trends, but also variations that the critical literature on workers' subjectivities overlook or broadly generalize whit stereotypes of the "alienated" or "hard-working" or more recently the "neoliberalized" worker. In some cases, this oversight originates from the researchers' strong theoretical assumptions, leading them to neglect or reinterpret conflicting observations. In other cases, the generalization is due to the peripheral importance placed on the question of meaning, while the real investigative energy is spent on the depths of class struggle. Variations rather than generalizations are present in some research that takes a more empiricist, mostly quantitative approach, but these lack an in-depth exploration of the dynamic making and unmaking of meanings and subjectivities in daily interaction.

Combining ethnography and a theoretical framework that is receptive to variation, I scrutinize the meanings of work, underscore the variety, explore

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1   Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 4 1938-1940* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 391.

2   I discussed the more general meaning of wage work in the previous chapter.

their outcomes, and interpret the formations of different subjectivities. Besides employing studies on class, which mostly provide generalizations about the issue of meaning, I draw on the literature of industrial sociology and the sociology of work. As Burawoy points out, "it has been left to industrial sociology to restore the subjective moment of labor, to challenge the idea of the subjectless subject, to stress the ubiquitous resistance of everyday life."[3] First, I examine the literature on the meaning of work, present the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches, and pinpoint my contribution. Then I will return to the field and explore meanings İkitelli workers attach to work under four headings.

§ 3.1   Approaches to the Meaning of Work

I argue that there are three approaches to the question of meaning that workers attach to work under capitalism, and I examine each below. The first group comprises radical studies that focus on criticism and, with respect to the question of meaning, on the issue of alienation. No matter how they consider culture important in their analyses, they all imply that structure determines the meanings workers attach to work. On the question of the meaning of work, they stick with the structuralist line and deduce that work under capitalism offers few positive and almost no intrinsic meanings for manual workers. The meanings of work are usually distinguished as extrinsic, which designates monetary or social meanings related but not inherent to the work itself, and intrinsic, such as the creativity and fulfillment a worker feels while undertaking her work activities. The first approach claims that for the working class, intrinsic meanings are impossible, or if they exist, they signify some false consciousness.

The second approach is a reaction to the first, but also to mainstream human resources theories. Although proponents of this approach are also critical of capitalism, their criticism is less radical, so they are more optimistic about workers' intentions and their opportunities to find positive, intrinsic meaning

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3   Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism* (University of Chicago Press, 1979), 77.

from their work. Without the structural bias, they focus on the subjective moment and claim that workers tend to attach positive intrinsic meanings to their work. A third line of inquiry, mostly quantitative in nature, examines variation rather than proposing a generalization. They reveal the ratios of groups among a sample of workers expressing different meanings about work. After an examination of these three approaches, I will present a short discussion on the context for meaning, such as the historical period, the class location or occupation of the worker, and the geography.

3.1.1 *Critical Classics: The Structuralist Moment*

It is appropriate to start with how the classical literature on working class subjectivities approaches the issue of the meaning of work. Focusing on the relations of (symbolic) power, authority, and respect both in the workplace and out, Sennett and Cobb reduce the positive meanings (i.e. satisfaction) that workers might attach to their jobs to a function of their degree of autonomy.[4] The authors assume that a worker can experience satisfaction in as much as she enjoys autonomy: "[the] real meaning of hard work is independence from foreman."[5] Thus, manual workers who have little if any autonomy cannot attach intrinsic, positive meanings to their jobs. All of the meanings Sennett and Cobb mention are negative: "woodwork,"[6] "taking orders," "I'm nothing there," "I let my mind wander, I mean I just think about my son,"[7] "people can order you around."[8] Their humanist-socialist quest – to show that the motto that "man lives not by bread alone" also applies to workers – concentrates on the issue of respect from others. However, that quest blinds them to the possibility that beside bread and respect, workers might get some satisfaction from their jobs similar, to upper- and middle-classes. The authors' vision is restrictive in the sense that they presume, beyond pay, workers look for nothing more than respect from supervisors, coworkers, family, etc. Workers are

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4   Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class.*

5   Ibid., 98.

6   Ibid., 250.

7   Ibid., 94.

8   Ibid., 98.

denied the privilege of intrinsic satisfaction under the conditions of capitalism. Moreover, even the extrinsic satisfactions available to them seem moderate.

Sennett and Cobb actually show that some workers clearly disrespect white-collar work and in that way dignify manual labor,[9] but that does not factor into the authors' conclusions. When a skilled factory worker expresses some satisfaction about his job, the interviewers drive him into a corner such that he feels compelled to say, "look you maybe have the wrong impression of me, I'm no slave driver about this." When the authors conclude that "finally he decided, [hard work] was a matter of doing the job in such a way that other people respect you for it; the virtue in hard work is extrinsic, in a way, to the work itself,"[10] it leaves the readers unsure about whose ideas these are, the interviewee's or the interviewer's. This substitutionism is one of the few flaws of this groundbreaking work.

Another classic work with a similar but more elaborate stance on the question of meaning is Paul Willis' Learning to Labor. For Willis, the quest for meaning is obvious and enduring:

> Though one must always take account of regional and occupational variations, the central thing about the working class culture of the shop floor is that, despite harsh conditions and external direction, people do look for meaning and impose frameworks. … They exercise their abilities and seek enjoyment in activity, even where most controlled by others.[11]

Whereas Sennett and Cobb's work is based on interviews and off-site observation, Willis' work draws on an ethnography of high school kids and factory workers, which provided him the opportunity to see daily satisfactions that workers experience on the shop floor. On the other hand, the fact that working-class identity is much more tangible and popular in England compared to the United States (especially in the 1970s) may have yielded important subjective differences among the sample.

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9   Ibid., 22-23.

10   Ibid., 100.

11   Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, 52.

Willis claims that working-class men of England and high school youth who embrace the working-class masculine identity, namely "lads," are destined to and somehow contented with not finding any "satisfaction and particular meaning in work." To compensate for their fate, they cultivate a culture that "has an ability to generate extrinsic group-based satisfactions to support the self and give it value."[12] Willis is not precise about the reason why these men cannot receive intrinsic satisfaction from work, but implies that the culture they embrace may deny that possibility.[13] However, he is adamant that working-class men do not derive intrinsic meanings but only extrinsic ones such as money and "cultural membership amongst 'real men.'"[14] The central themes of this working class culture are masculinity and toughness as they have emerged and forged in the school. The culture is "a form of masculine chauvinism"[15] in working-class style, involving "oppositional solidarity," "a humorous presence," "style and value not based on formal job status,"[16] and an attitude glorifying practical ability while ridiculing theoretical knowledge.[17]

According to Willis, "[t]here are, of course, very different ways of being related subjectively to the giving of labour power"[18] and he distinguishes between two groups of kids in the high school. Besides the lads described above, there are "conformists" who are "much more likely to believe in the possibility of satisfaction in work" and who "see their own values and achievements expressed through the intrinsic properties of work activity."[19] There is a "stark contrast between the lads' retrenchment to the absolute minimum of personal meanings in work" and "the possibility of total absorption in work as the essential pivot of private and emotional life" as expressed by some "conformists."[20] The "conformists" seem to be headed towards skilled jobs and strive

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12   Ibid., 101-02.

13   Ibid., 102.

14   Ibid., 100.

15   Ibid., 52.

16   Ibid., 132.

17   Ibid., 56.

18   Ibid., 104.

19   Ibid.

20   Ibid., 105.

for upward mobility although we do not hear much about their presence on the shop floor.

While Willis' work is a masterpiece, in terms of our discussion the duality he presents between the lads, who have on oppositional and distant relationship to work, and the conformists, who are compliant and work-oriented, is simplistic and misleading. Those who do not attach meaning to their jobs might also be compliant, or those who are work-oriented might also be resistant, as I will show below. The misleading duality might stem from Willis' insistence that lads do not and cannot get intrinsic satisfaction from their jobs, even as their praise for manual work over theoretical knowledge might imply just such some direct, intrinsic satisfaction. Another problem is Willis' static view that these two subjectivities are permanently stuck to given people.

The third classic work with which I wish to engage is Burawoy's Manufacturing Consent, a more strictly structuralist, Marxist research in comparison with the former two. But its methodological uniqueness is an attempt to merge a structuralist explanation with the subjective moment by considering the contribution of industrial sociology. Nevertheless, the autonomy that Burawoy grants to the subjective is less than that of *Hidden Injuries* or *Learning to Labour*. The main focus of Burawoy's factory ethnography is how surplus value is "obscured" and "secured" within the factory.[21] Burawoy acknowledges possible satisfactions of the workers he studied, but for him, these satisfactions are of limited and trivial nature. He calls them "relative," "apparent," or "repressive" satisfactions. What he prefers to highlight is the way they contribute to the process of obscuring and securing surplus value.

Burawoy further claims that all the possible satisfactions derive from "making out" but nowhere else. "Making out" is "a series of games" in which operators working in a piece-rate system attempt to achieve levels of production that earn incentive pay.[22] While Willis claimed that shop-floor culture re-

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21   Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism*, 73, 92, 135.

22   Ibid., 51.

volves around "a self-claimed oppositional masculinity," for Burawoy it revolves around making out.[23] He argues that the literature romanticizes the games that workers create and their consequent satisfactions on the shop floor. Instead, he shows how these games are supported by management, since making out is one mechanism through which surplus labor is obscured and secured.[24]

Burawoy correlates any of work's positive meanings with the game of making out. He approvingly quotes Roy that the game offers "opportunities for self-expression" by involving "the elements of control provided by the application of knowledge, skill, ingenuity, speed and stamina heightened interest and lent to the exhilaration of 'winning' feelings of 'accomplishment.'"[25] The game means more than the few pennies of bonus pay: It entails approval from coworkers, "prestige, sense of accomplishment, and pride;" moreover, it eliminates "much of the drudgery and boredom associated with industrial work."[26] Burawoy himself "got hooked on the game" and took seriously his goal to "establish the worth and esteem associated with making out."[27]

Obviously, these meanings and satisfactions can also be derived from contexts other than the piece-rate system or the game of making out. Burawoy is probably correct that the context of his research, those satisfactions would be more difficult to attain without the game. But there is no reason – he certainly provides none – to assume that without the game there is no possibility of satisfaction in that type of job. Workers in other contexts may enjoy "challenge," "power," and "virtue of mastery"[28] even without the specific game of

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23 Ibid., 64.

24 Ibid., 92. Hodson also points out the importance of "side games." However, in contrast to Burawoy, Hodson argues that workers defend their dignity through games. See Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 18. For another mention of games, see Studs Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), xviii.

25 Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism*, 84.

26 Ibid., 89.

27 Ibid., 88.

28 Ibid., 149.

making out. These satisfactions might be articulated and exploited by management to secure and obscure the extraction of surplus value, but this is neither the destiny nor single function of such satisfactions.

As we saw in these classics, the dominant genre of critical labor studies with an interest in subjectivity focuses on the question of hegemony: specifically, how the political and economic order produces and reproduces the consent of workers. This focus mostly renders the meaning of work peripheral, as Hyman succinctly expresses in an epigraph of this chapter.[29] These studies tend to interpret any hint of intrinsic satisfaction or meaning as actually extrinsic. Moreover, they consider any satisfaction the worker feels to be evidence of her entrapment by the hegemony.[30] Noon and Bylton make the same observation: "Marxists are likely to argue that people who claim to be satisfied and fulfilled at work are merely expressing a 'false consciousness.'"[31] To uncover the exploitative and oppressive aspects of capitalism and specifically the experience of the working class, they tend to overlook workers' satisfactions with their work, consider them as extrinsic, or approach them as symptoms of hegemony.[32] Sennett and Cobb do not consider the issue, because they are cer-

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29   Hyman, "Strategy or Structure? Capital, Labour and Control," 34.

30   After an unproductive decade, critical labor studies in the United States in the mid-1990s "turned from the degradation of work and its regulation to an open attempt to reverse the decline of unions." See Burawoy, "The Public Turn from Labor Process to Labor Movement." This new literature on labor also did not pay much attention to the question of the meaning of work. See for example Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*; Beverly Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*. In another academic genre of studies on workers focusing not on work per se, but rather on values and self-identities, the same assumptions are embraced. See for example Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*; Kefalas, *Working-Class Heroes: Protecting Home, Community, and Nation in a Chicago Neighborhood*.

31   Mike Noon and Paul Blyton, *The Realities of Work* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 232.

32   Cressey and MacInnes argue from a Marxist line of argumentation that the reason capital is depicted of as omnipotent and labor depicted as doomed to deskilling, mindless jobs and therefore workplace subordination is Marx's theory of the real subordination of labor. See

tain that there can be no satisfaction for manual workers other than the respect some desperately strive to earn by their hard-work. Willis presents a dualistic world where the first group remains willfully distant from both the establishment and from intrinsic meaning, while the second is more involved. As for Burawoy, the only "relative" satisfactions possible for workers is in the context of a game, which tragically serves to obscure, secure, and increase surplus value.

To give a more recent example, consider Lamont's impressive study on the moral worldviews of the working class. She adopts a comparative approach, which considers four groups of workers, namely whites and blacks in the United States, and French and North Africans in France. Workers in both countries emphasize "the importance of hard work, responsibility, and keeping the world in moral order."[33] "Being hardworking and responsible" is one of four key factors she identified in these working-class worlds.[34] She observes that "a strong work ethic is often construed as a matter of honor and an essential source of personal worth" and that "coworkers who are not hardworking are a frequent object of scorn."[35] Despite these observations which signal the possibility of intrinsic satisfactions in work, she unquestioningly embraces the assumption of earlier scholars that for working class work cannot involve intrinsic meaning. She draws on Rodgers: "Even for those who chafed at labor, the appeal to the moral centrality of work was too useful to resist. Pitched in the abstract, it turned necessity into pride and servitude into honor."[36] After also concurring with Goldthorpe and Lockwood's argument for "the inherent meaninglessness" of working class jobs, Lamont concludes that her interviewees turn to family to find "intrinsic satisfaction."[37]

Peter Cressey and John MacInnes, "Voting for Ford: Industrial Democracy and the Control of Labour," *Capital & Class* 4, no. 2 (1980).

33 Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*, 245.

34 Ibid., 20.

35 Ibid., 24.

36 Ibid., 23.

37 Ibid., 30.

To stress the exploitative and alienating aspects of work rather than possible satisfactory ones is understandable given the intent to confront the liberal hegemony. This reasonable concern should not undermine an understanding of an additional, potential aspect of workers' subjectivities. The discursive gesture, which is utilitian in terms of the polemic, does not represent the whole reality. Otherwise we fall in the trap of what Thompson calls substitutionism,[38] namely the intellectual trap of thinking not only in support of, but also in the name of the oppressed, which reproduces the very hierarchy and 'class'ification between the elite and the masses. For four reasons, it is crucial to go beyond the interconnected myths of "meaningless manual work" and the "docile attached" worker.

The first reason is *empirical*. These two myths are not only incorrect as generalizations, but even to reduce these concepts into tendencies might not work. Working-class people toiling in manual jobs can attach positive meanings to their jobs, including intrinsic ones. The distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic is important, albeit ambiguous. If being tested as harshly as some researchers do while investigating manual workers, even many professionals who claim intrinsic meanings from their work might not pass the litmus test. On the other hand, attachment to the work does not necessarily imply passivity. A worker can both experience a certain satisfaction at work and at the same time be critical towards and active against her employer. In another words, being detached from one's work does not automatically imply a critical attitude, let alone a resistant one. In fact, some workers I mention below exhibit both a sense of satisfaction with their jobs and certain critical attitude toward their employers.

The second is *theoretical*. An uncanny assumption may lie behind statements about "meaningless manual work" – i.e. that working class people can-

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38   For a discussion on substitutionism, see Harvey J. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 176. Burawoy similarly warns "Intellectuals who exchange ideas over the heads of those whose interests they claim to defend, without founding their work on the lived experience of those people, run the risk of irrelevance and elitism." See Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production: Factory Regimes under Capitalism and Socialism* (London: Verso, 1985), 19.

not get intrinsic satisfaction from their jobs. To assume that manual wage labor is destined to be unsatisfactory – at least – under capitalist conditions reflects and reinforces an important aspect of class hierarchy: the differentiation between intellectual and manual labor.[39] Even under capitalism, social scientists tend to generously identify intrinsic work satisfactions within certain occupations such as professions, including their own. What can be the reason we do not do the same for manual occupations other than following the centuries-old upper-class assumption that manual labor is intrinsically inferior to intellectual?

The third reason is *strategic*: People tend to dislike coworkers who are sloppy or severly detached from their work, if for no other reason that in many work situations, sloppiness means imposing a burden on some other coworker. Even when this is not the case, such coworkers can damage the motivation of others, which they need to withstand their own daily burdens. Sloppy workers can hardly be the leaders of resistance. Moreover, to be able to resist the management, one has to enjoy a level of self-confidence, an upper hand in relation to the management, which is hard to claim if one's work performance is not good enough. To be hard-working is one important form of empowerment in relation to an employer. Therefore, the labor movement is in need of those who are engaged and have positive feelings about their jobs. They are the most likely, future labor leaders.[40]

And the last reason is *utopic*. In a post-capitalist world, will humankind continue to respect and compensate intellectual labor more than manual labor? Tentatively, I believe we should not. But to scrutinize the question, we

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39 This logic and the belittling of the "lower" echelons and their jobs is ubiquitous. Weber identifies a similar contempt of the highest echelon of white-collars for the lower: "The idea that the bureaucrat is absorbed in subaltern routine and that only the 'director' performs the interesting, intellectually demanding tasks is a preconceived notion of the literati." See Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1404.

40 Of course, a person who hates his job might also work hard and enjoy the same opportunities as someone who loves their work. It is possible. But I think that along the way, most of those who work hard already have or acquire on the way some positive feelings about their jobs – if for no other reason due to psychological stability.

should certainly think and research more about work, especially manual work, to evaluate it in a fair, independent way, free from hegemonic prejudices.

3.1.2   *Optimistic Studies: The Subjective Moment*

To understand the positive meanings workers may attach to their jobs, one must turn to a more optimistic line of argument embraced mostly by the literature on the sociology of work, which by definition provides a closer and empirically more sensitive investigation into the meanings of work. To start, I present Halle's ethnography of an automated chemical company in the United States, which follows the tradition of cultural studies of the working class, a literature spinning off from classical works like those of Sennett and Cobb, Willis, and Burawoy. Halle's work maintains its share of this literature's pessimism and emphasis on structure, but is more sensitive to the nuances and variety witnessed in the field. His generalization is that "most men find the work … dull and uninteresting, for it is inherently repetitive;"[41] but he points out that there are exceptions,[42] and there are different departments and jobs within the factory that tend to associate different meanings with the work. The biggest group are production workers of which few find the job interesting or enjoyable. It is not for them "to take pride in the results of their labor," because their typical output is "a liquid that smells unpleasant and gives off harmful vapors."[43] However, among support workers, the most popular position in the plant is that of mechanics, who mostly find their jobs interesting.[44] Work in the packaging plant seems to be least favorite because – among other things – it is boring, assembly line work. The warehouse offers little overtime, which is to say it offers less money, but it "allows plenty of opportunity for social activity, which is why it is so popular."[45] Halle deduces that the qualities blue collar workers value in a job (apart from pay and security) are variety, freedom from

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41   Halle, *America's Working Man: Work, Home, and Politics among Blue Collar Property Owners*, 125.

42   See especially endnote 1 in ibid., 145.

43   Ibid.

44   Ibid., 127-32.

45   Ibid., 142.

supervision, and the ability to work at their own pace.[46] Although he concludes that "the prospect of providing interesting and satisfying work in factories is slight," he provides a credible, nuanced, and varied picture.

Bradley and his colleagues argue that the assumption that "people work primarily for money," the "myth of economic worker," as they call it, is very reductionist.[47] They provide data from their fieldwork on shipbuilding workers in which half of interviewees identified something in addition to renumeration as their motivation to work.[48] They propose that …

> … we can begin to move towards a sociology of work that, while considering the structural implications of formal employment under capitalism, will also acknowledge that work, as an activity and a set of social relationships, may provide meaning and identity for the individual.[49]

Savage and his associates investigate a working-class neighborhood in Greater Manchester inhabited mostly by manual laborers working in a variety of sectors. The most salient feature of these workers' "practical habitus" is a culture of "hard graft" – i.e., "a culture of unending work and toil."[50] They have a very precarious and insecure position within the labor market, however "de-industrialization has led not to the collapse of manual skills as such but to their dispersion to diverse kinds of outlets."[51] Most important for our concerns, the authors note that these workers enjoy a "moderate pride in possessing manual, practical skills that earned them not only a living but also degrees of self-respect."[52] Although what Savage and his colleges observed in the field was reminiscent of what Lamont described as "a strong work ethic, often construed as

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46   Ibid., 145.

47   Harriet Bradley et al., *Myths at Work* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 170.

48   Ibid., 181

49   Ibid., 178-79.

50   Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst, "Local Habitus and Working-Class Culture," 121.

51   Ibid., 107.

52   Ibid., 120

a matter of honor;"[53] her assumption that manual work is intrinsically meaningless led Lamont to conclude that this is an extrinsic satisfaction. Savage and his co-authors underscore the pride workers feel about their manual skills implying an intrinsic satisfaction.

Sennett claims that "all human beings want the satisfaction of doing something well and want to believe in what they do," but he also stresses that the "new capitalism" makes this even harder.[54] In his more recent book, Sennett suggests the concept of craftsmanship enabling him to change his former point of view about the opportunities manual work might entail. He defines craftsmanship as "doing something well for its own sake," whereby "the pursuit of quality ideally becomes an end in itself."[55] More crucially, he grants the spirit of craftsmanship is accessible to all. His observation is worth quoting at length:

> This … spirit can give even low-level, seemingly unskilled laborers pride in their work. For instance, my student Bonnie Dill in the 1970s did a study of cleaning workers in Harlem – poorly paid black women often abused by their white employers downtown. At the end of the day, these women salvaged some fragment of self-worth in having cleaned a house well, though they were seldom thanked for it. The house was clean. When I studied bakers in Boston in those same years, in a family run bakery where the most junior members were treated roughly and pressed too hard by fathers and uncles, the results in the early morning similarly salved some of the upset: the bread was good. While it's important not to romanticize the balm of craftsmanship, it matters equally to understand the consequence of doing something well for its own sake. Ability counts for something, by a measure which is both concrete and impersonal: clean is clean.[56]

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53   Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration.*

54   Richard Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 194.

55   Ibid., 104.

56   Ibid., 104-05.

One major research is an ambitiously broad one, based on a "Meaning of Working" survey conducted in eight countries.[57] Among many other things researches asked their interviewees the "lottery question," that is, whether they would continue to work "if they had enough money to live comfortably for the rest of their life without working." The authors conclude "it is evident that working activities also fulfill noneconomic needs of individuals" since "were this not the case, it would be difficult to explain why 65–95 percent of individuals in national labor force samples in a variety of countries" answer the question in the affirmative.[58] Importantly, interviewees were also asked about their job preference after winning the lottery and they reported that they would opt for a working week of 16 to 30 hours and not necessarily in their existing jobs. Since the 1950s variations of the lottery question have been common, and such research has systematically produced similar result,s suggesting that work fulfills needs other than economic ones.[59]

Tilly and Tilly argue in a similar vein that "contrary to labor market theories that view work as simply an instrument to obtain goods, people do value work for its own sake,"[60] concluding:

> [Workers] work for pay, to be sure, but they also toil for pride in a job well done, for the enjoyment of learning, for the appreciation of bosses and coworkers, for continuing access to the social world of the workplace, and for the purpose of fulfilling traditions or the expectations of others… This mix of motivations cannot readily be simplified to a simple objective function.[61]

Watson provides another perspective from which to understand the meaning of work by focusing on its nonexistence, which is to say, on unemployment.[62]

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57 MOW-team, *The Meaning of Working* (New York: Academic Press, 1987).

58 Ibid., 79.

59 P. M. Bain et al., *The Meaning of Work in the New Economy* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 11; Noon and Blyton, *The Realities of Work*, 76.

60 Chris Tilly and Charles Tilly, *Work under Capitalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 114.

61 Ibid., 116. For a similar argument, see Noon and Blyton, *The Realities of Work*, 76.

62 Tony J. Watson, *Sociology, Work and Industry* (London: Routledge, 2003), 207.

Concentrating on what people lose when they become unemployed, Jehoda – quoted by Watson – claims that a person's job:

> … imposes a time structure on the day; enlarges the scope of social relations beyond the often emotionally charged ones of family and neighbors; gives them a feeling of purpose and achievement through task involvement in a group setting; assigns social status and clarifies personal identity; and requires one to engage in regular activity.[63]

Referring to Yankelovich's study showing that 80 percent of American adults link being the breadwinner to masculinity,[64] Noon and Blyton point out that unemployed males feel like less of a man.

Along these lines, Torlina offers an impressive, emotional argument: an authentic self-assertion by manual workers.[65] Torlina, a social scientist with years of employment as a skilled construction worker under his belt, carves a strong argument against those who would depict manual work as inherently meaningless. Instead, he offers an almost opposite point of view, which suffers from methodological and conceptual flaws.[66] The importance of his contribution is not his reactionary generalization of manual workers and their "inherent" satisfactions with their job experiences. It lies with two defensible, interconnected points against the symbolic violence coming from the privileged.

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63 Ibid.

64 Noon and Blyton, *The Realities of Work*, 58.

65 Jeff Torlina, *Working Class: Challenging Myths About Blue-Collar Labor* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2011).

66 The main methodological problem is his sample consisting of thirty-one male construction and factory workers. Twelve of these men possess some craft knowledge. Of the thirty-one men, sixteen are union members, and "one quarter" own their own business (whether self-employed or themselves employers is unclear). See ibid., 35. Obviously, this composition is far from being representative of manual workers. Moreover, Torlina states that one interviewee was included in the sample "to lend insight into why a young man who recently graduated high school with honors would choose construction work as a career goal." See ibid., 200. The conceptual problem is the definition of class, which focuses on blue- versus white-collar distinction overlooking the employer versus employee distinction. This is obvious in his inclusion of business owners comprising one quarter of the sample.

First, he convincingly shows that the upper ranks in a given occupational hierarchy, including even Marxist social scientists, who would "honor and defend blue-collar workers," tend to devalue the experiences of the working class at work.[67] Due to the ideological stance, social scientists tend to interpret positive orientations to manual labor "as a function of cognitive dissonance or false consciousness"[68] even when they observe such orientations in the field. Besides this ideological blinder, an additional reason Torlina presents is the reflexive, self-defense mechanisms of workers themselves: "Workers realize that admitting to finding satisfaction in work that is regarded as simplistic and meaningless by researchers would be the same as admitting to being stupid, so they may not be truthful in their job appraisal."[69] Another methodological problem that might lead researchers to flawed conclusions is oversampling of assembly line workers, though they have always been but a small segment of the working class.[70]

Second, owing to his personal, inside experience, Torlina vividly reveals the genuine satisfactions that at least some manual workers experince, some of which may be surprising to outsiders. For some people, obvious, tangible outcomes of manual work make it easier to feel a sense of accomplishment and pride.[71] For others, the meaning of work lies in "its importance both to society as a whole and within the workers' companies and industries."[72] Some of the men spoke of the challenging nature of their jobs as a factor that makes their work satisfying.[73] For others, "simply working hard and well is recognized as an even greater source of pride," which is automatically assumed to

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67   Employers do this because it is profitable. Devaluing the manual jobs justifies lower wages and reinforces lines of authority. The vested interest of white-collar workers is that this devaluation reinforces the economic and symbolic importance of their college training and professional skills (ibid., 187).

68   Torlina, *Working Class: Challenging Myths About Blue-Collar Labor*, 12.

69   Ibid., 121.

70   Ibid., 163. He mentions that only 5 percent of factory employees worked on an assembly line in the United States even as far back as the beginning of the 1960s. See ibid., 17.

71   Ibid., 25.

72   Ibid., 29.

73   Ibid., 33.

be extrinsic by some of the aforementioned scholars.[74] Due to the limited nature of his sample, Torlina's arguments and observations may be valid only for skilled manual workers. However, his insight into manual work is broader, and his observations may well be valid for less skilled workers, although the ratio may be lower. Despite employing an exaggerated rhetoric throughout his, the ultimate conclusion is more balanced:

> Workers may be subordinate and deskilled according to formal organization models, but informally the situation is often quite different. The difficulties involved in blue-collar work can be negative, but they also produce important outcomes for individuals and for society. Working class exploitation must be recognized alongside recognition of the rewards of skill and meaningful labor.[75]

In *Dignity at Work*, Hodson builds a strong argument claiming that "in the workplace, dignity is realized through countless small acts of resistance against abuse and an equally strong drive to take pride in one's daily work."[76] He succinctly criticizes the romanticizing of resistance noting that besides resistance there are three other strategies workers use to defend their dignity at work: "citizenship, the creation of independent meaning systems, [and the] development of social relations at work."[77] By citizenship he means "creative and purposive activities oriented toward helping production successfully take place that are above and beyond organizational requirements," further arguing that "taking pride in one's work is a widespread and possibly universal phenomenon (although it is pushed far below the surface)."[78]

With the concept of dignity and the different means of defending it, Hodson provides us a new perspective from which to make sense of a range of workers' daily activities and attitudes. However, he seems to ironically embrace another romanticism: that of the hard worker. To encounter the liberal economists' or critical sociologists' generalizations of the "economic worker,"

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74   Ibid., 34.

75   Ibid., 185.

76   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 3.

77   Ibid., 4.

78   Ibid., 18.

and meaningless manual work, Hodson ends up offering another overbroad generalization: "Workers want to participate and contribute in the workplace, but they are too often prevented from doing so by unilateral management power, mismanagement, and abuse."[79] To empower a defense of workers – that they would participate and contribute more if only management were more democratic – he ignores the possibility of a resistance to work itself that is distinct from resistance to mismanagement or exploitation. While, Hodson reveals that resistance to management is the least common form[80] and citizenship and pride are highest[81] among workers in worker-owned cooperatives compared to firms owned by capitalists. Nevertheless, resistance to work is almost certainly existent in these worker-owned cooperatives, as observed in the conjuncture of workers' self-management during Spanish revolution.[82] Resistance to work is definitely exaggerated by mainstream, liberal scholarship in order to justify authoritarian management techniques, but this does not mean that it does not exist.

As Noon and Bylton claim, researchers should allow for …

… the theoretical possibility of (objective) conditions of alienation producing (subjective) feelings of non-alienation, as well as (objective) non-alienating conditions leading to (subjective) feelings of being alienated.[83]

Experience is always discursive and politically constructed; it is always already "an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted."[84] Moreover, as Weeks states "the problem with work cannot be reduced to the extraction of surplus value or the degradation of skill, but extends to the ways that work

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79   Ibid., 259. For example, Bradley et.al. also seem to romanticize the incentive of public employees. See Bradley et al., *Myths at Work*, 184-85.

80   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 188.

81   Ibid., 190.

82   Michael M. Seidman, *Workers against Work: Labor in Paris and Barcelona During the Popular Fronts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

83   Noon and Blyton, *The Realities of Work*, 235.

84   Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," 401.

dominates our lives."[85] Researchers should therefore leave the door open for a resistance to work itself and maybe even for a politics of refusal of work.

3.1.3   *What About Variance?*

Obviously, we should balance the respective pessimism and the optimism of these two lines of research and find a synthesis. Capitalist hegemony strives to exploit workers, on the one hand, and to obscure this process, on the other. It seeks to make the "labor market" more insecure, working conditions more exploitative and oppressive, and job tasks more alienating – if these are believed to increase surplus value. Workers are thus inclined to lose their own convictions and their own dignity a critical extent leading them to question themselves rather than of the system. This does not mean that there is no room for progress, nothing to defend or gain in the struggle to realize one's rights and dignity. I should add that this struggle is not only for "daily bread" or for "recognition," but also for "daily meaning," and "for astonishment rather than torpor."[86] "Tactics,"[87] "weapons of the weak,"[88] or "resistance"[89] might indeed "hand themselves over as the tool of the ruling classes"[90] by removing the stress of the disadvantaged classes in a controlled way. However, the struggle to change structure can arise only from the daily struggles of underprivileged and from the culture bred by this struggle. "[A]ny other alternative must of necessity reintroduce alienation into the cultural process," which will kill the liberating possibility of struggle and introduce a new hegemony instead.[91]

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85   Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*, 13.

86   Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do*, xiii.

87   Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

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

89   Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 142.

90   Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 4 1938-1940*.

91   Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*, 49.

Another important problem in the literature discussed above is the absence of variance. Weither pessimistically or optimistically, there is a tendency to generalize the sample and then the universe. Other than Bradley, et al's and Willis' dualistic presentations, as well as marginal exceptions within Torlina and Halle, the tendency is to make cynical or sanguine generalizations. Keeping in mind that "sociologists like to discover and explain variance,"[92] I will present variations, as an antidote against extreme pessimism or optimism. The human condition is varied and variegated, as always.

The type of studies in which variations is most apparent are quantitative studies on the meaning of or engagement in work. International "Meaning of Working" (MOW) research is the most prominent, as mentioned above. The central theme of the research is work centrality, which is defined as "a measure based on cognitions and affects that reflect the degree of general importance that working has in the life of an individual at any given point in time."[93] This involves the degree of identification with and commitment to work, among other things. Although not exactly corresponding to the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic meaning, which I have operationalized thus far, a reasonable correlation between the centrality of work and intrinsic meanings/satisfactions may be assumed. The researchers distinguish among four groups in the sample covering 15 thousand people in eight countries. These groups and their shares with in the sample in percentages is below.

Table 3.1   Work centrality[94]

Very low	Moderately low	Moderately high	Very high
8.5	26.5	35.2	29.8

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92   Halle, *America's Working Man: Work, Home, and Politics among Blue Collar Property Owners*, 296.

93   MOW-team, *The Meaning of Working*, 19.

94   Ibid., 251.

Another variable MOW researchers have constructed is work satisfaction. Based on the data of, unfortunately, only three countries (Israel, Netherlands and Yugoslavia), MOW distinguishes among five groups:

Table 3.2   Work satisfaction[95]

Dissatisfied	Some dissatisfaction	Neutral	Some Satisfaction	Very Satisfactory
4.2	9.3	9.5	44.5	29.2

MOW then clusters groups with similar meaning orientations according to sophisticated, four "meaning of working patterns." The first is the "instrumental pattern," which includes 30 percent of the respondents. Work is not a central issue in their lives, but rather an instrument for obtaining income. The second is the "expressive work centrality pattern," comprised of 25 percent of respondents. They stress intrinsic meanings about work and consider to be central to their lives. The third pattern includes workers, who believe work is a right rather than a duty and place a high value on the social contact dimension of working. This pattern is called the "entitlement and contact orientation pattern" and accounts for 20 percent of respondents. The last 25 percent, which seems residual as a category is called the "low entitlement pattern," and is comprised of workers whose lack of entitlement is counterbalanced by a medium level of obligation.[96]

Gallup's State of Global Workplace survey is qualitatively narrower in focus, market-driven, and produced for commercial reasons; however, it is worth consideration and quantitatively broader.[97] With responses from 73,752 people in 141 non-US countries and 151,335 people in the United States in 2011-2012, the global survey scrutinizes how "engaged" employees are, proposing three groups: engaged, not engaged, and actively disengaged. Engaged employees supposedly work with passion and feel a profound connection to their

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95   Ibid., 273. Due to missing data, the total is not 100 percent.

96   Ibid., 174-79.

97   Gallup, "State of Global Workplace," (Gallup, Inc., 2013).

company. Not engaged employees are defined as those who have essentially "checked out." They claimed to be sleepwalking through their workday, putting time but no energy or passion into their work. But importantly for our purposes, they are difficult to spot, since they are not hostile or disruptive. In contrast, the actively disengaged are unhappy and busy acting out their unhappiness by undermining what their engaged coworkers accomplish.[98]

Table 3.3   Employee engagement[99]

	Actively Disengaged	Not Engaged	Engaged
2008-2009	27	62	11
2011-2012	24	63	13

Lubeck's insights into the Muslim workers of Kano, a city in the northern Nigeria, follow from a survey done with 140 factory workers.[100] When asked to state the feature of their jobs they most liked, 47 percent give an "economic response," which includes reponses such as "only the money," "it allows me to feed my family and to avoid suffering," or "it's steady work, every day, not like casual labor."[101] While 19 percent report they like nothing they like about it, 9 percent state that they like being "left alone" ot not "being bothered." According to Lubeck, the remaining 26 percent find meaning in their jobs, as iluustrated by such responses as "I enjoy being around machines and I hope that I can learn to become skilled worker," or more commonly, "I enjoy being with my friends here at the factory." This data should be interpreted within its local-cultural context, which resembles Turkey at least in terms of religion and prev-

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98   Ibid., 17. Looking at the survey device, the claim that the "actively disengaged" actively undermine work seems exaggerated and overly interpretive. It would be more accurate to describe him as extremely disengaged.

99   Ibid., 111-13.

100   Lubeck, *Islam and Urban Labor in Northern Nigeria: The Making of a Muslim Working Class.*

101   Ibid., 200-01.

alence of an independent peasantry. Lubeck underlines that for these Nigerians to accept wage labor is "to give up the independence and freedom that workers formerly enjoyed as craftsmen, traders, peasant farmers or mallams (imams)." For many of them factory work is the worst in this regard.[102]

Terkel, a Pulitzer-winning oral historian, provides the most qualitatively satisfying account of the various of meanings people attach to their work in *Working*. The book is based on interviews with mostly working class people, who talk "about what they do all day and how they feel about what they do." It is about the search for "daily meaning as well as daily bread"[103] by people who "are not themselves ashamed of their work, but society, they feel, looks upon them as a lesser species."[104] Terkel loosely sorts his interviewees into three groups, the first being "the happy few who find a savor in their daily job," that is "a meaning to their work well over and beyond the reward of the paycheck." They are mostly craftsman such as a stonemason, a piano tuner, and a bookbinder. The second is the most populous group with "a hardly concealed discontent," as exemplified by a spot-welder who reports: "I'm a machine," a steel worker telling "I'm a mule," a migrant worker confessing "I'm less than a farm implement," and a young accountant who divulges: "there is nothing to talk about."[105] The last group is "others, more articulate – at times, visionary – murmur of a hunger for 'beauty', 'a meaning,' 'a sense of pride'." A waitress, Dolores is one: "When I put the plate down, you don't hear a sound. When I pick up a glass, I want it to be just right." A veteran parking lot attendant is another: "I could drive any car like a baby, like a woman changes her baby's diaper." Besides his skill at drawing people out, Terkel's grouping of his subjects is inspiring and I will draw on it by proposing scertain revisions.

A closer look at the vivid variation Terkel presents is a proposal. While a stonemason - projecting his own experience – believes that "many that works with his hands takes pride in his work,"[106] a worker in a steel mill says:

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102   Ibid., 202-04.

103   Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do*, xiii.

104   Ibid., xx.

105   Ibid., xiv.

106   Ibid., 18.

It's hard to take pride in a bridge you're never gonna cross, in a door you're never gonna open. You're mass producing things and you never see the end result of it.[107]

Interestingly, he does not believe that there is nothing to be proud of in his work. But he is sure that society does not recognize his labor, the importance and the beauty of it. He is conflicted about the meaning of his job:

I would like to see a building, say, the Empire State, I would like to see on one side of it a foot-wide strip from top to bottom with the name of every bricklayer, the name of every electrician, with all the names. So when a guy walked by, he could take his son and say, "See, that's me over there on the forty-fifth floor. I put the steel beam in." Picasso can point to a painting. What can I point to? A writer can point to a book. Everybody should have something to point to.[108]

3.1.4 *Context of Meaning: History, Occupation, Class Location, and Locality*

Although not determined by it, the meaning of work has always been deeply influenced by the structure of work. The historical deterioration of working conditions since the 1970s due to neoliberalism (or new capitalism) has had an impact on job satisfaction as traced by longitudinal surveys. Occupation, class location, or more specific factors such as job and employment status do affect average satisfaction levels. Finally, geography has an impact in at least two ways: differences in culture and working conditions in different localitions reflect on the meanings of work.

Through longitudinal surveys we know that job satisfaction has decreased in the last few decades, probably because of the deterioration of working con-

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107 Ibid., 1.
108 Ibid., 2.

ditions. In the United States, the Conference Board has been surveying employees' job satisfaction since 1987.[109] According to their research, the percentage of American employees who were satisfied at work was 61.1 in 1987, 59 in 1995, 42.6 in 2010 (all time low), and 47.7 in 2013. Jung and his colleagues point out to some evidences showing that the downward trend is a global phenomenon.[110]

Occupations, class locations and employment status matter, as quantitative research like "Meaning of Working" reveals. This research examines "work centrality" with a mean score ranging between 0 and 10. It is highest among chemical engineers (7.54), followed by the self-employed[111] (7.45), teachers (7.26), textile workers (7.07), tool- and die makers (6.89), white-collar workers[112] (6.66),, and lastly temporary workers[113] (6.22).[114] The percentages of these who have an "expressive work centrality pattern" is relevant: the highest (41 percent) is among teachers, followed by the self-employed (36 percent), then by chemical engineers (32 percent), textile workers (25 percent), temporary workers (23 percent), and finally tool- and die makers and white-collar (22 percent).[115] It is interesting to note that low level white collars seem to enjoy intrinsic meanings at no higher level than blue collar workers, and the ratio of expressively satisfied among top-ranking teachers is only double that of the lowest ranking tool- and die makers.

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109   The Conference Board, "Job Satisfaction: 2014 Edition," (The Conference Board, 2014). In this survey, respondents are simply asked if they are satisfied, but satisfaction is subsequently broken into its components and each component is examined separately.

110   Kwangho Jung, M Jae Moon, and Sung Deuk Hahm, "Do Age, Gender, and Sector Affect Job Satisfaction? Results from the Korean Labor and Income Panel Data," *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 27, no. 2 (2007).

111   This is a specific definition of self-employed, consisting of businessmen with less than 8 employees in non-professional jobs, which implies "small shopkeepers." See MOW-team, *The Meaning of Working*, 46.

112   This is also a specific definition of white collars, which includes low- to semi-skilled, or lower-service-function employees whose occupations are influenced by automation and technology. See ibid., 47.

113   Temporary workers employed through an employment agency. See ibid.

114   Ibid., 85.

115   Ibid., 181.

Gallup's data sheds light on differences among occupations. The sample is by far the largest and most reliable for the United States, whose data is presented together with Canada. The percentage of the engaged is expectedly highest (34 percent) among managers, executives, and officials. It is 30 percent among professional workers, 28 percent among construction/mining workers, 27 percent among clerical and office workers, and just 23 percent among manufacturing and production workers.[116] Although engagement does not directly correlate with intrinsic meanings, we can assume some relationship. And the similarity between professional and construction and mining workers is interesting.

Expected income is another factor affecting satisfaction, as clearly demonstrated by Conference Board research showing that the percentage of satisfied is 64 percent among those earning more than $125,000 a year, and just 24.4 percent among those making under $15,000. We have seen that work centrality and the "expressive work centrality pattern" were relatively low among temporary workers. Compelling data demonstrating the impact of status of employment was actually collected in Turkey. Buğra and her colleges report that the work satisfaction level is higher among unionized workers (6.5 percent) compared to formally employed but non-unionized workers (5.3 percent). It was even lower among informal sector workers (4.7 percent).[117]

The last structural factor that conditions the meanings of work to be examined here is locality. Differences among local cultures and local working conditions are the two major ways locality influences the sense of meaning. Although there are accounts of regional variation,[118] I focus on the nation-state level variation. MOW research demonstrates that the mean score of work centrality varies among the eight nations it studied: the highest was Japan (7.78), followed by Yugoslavia (7.30); the lowest was Britain (6.36), preceded

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116   Gallup, "State of Global Workplace," 84.

117   Fikret Adaman, Ayşe Buğra, and Ahmet İnsel, "Societal Context of Labor Union Strategy the Case of Turkey," *Labor Studies Journal* 34, no. 2 (2009).

118   Ben Cheng et al., "Job Satisfaction: 2014 Edition," news release, 2014, https://www.conference-board.org/press/pressdetail.cfm?pressid=5214; Richard J Jones and Peter J Sloane, "Regional Differences in Job Satisfaction," *Applied Economics* 41, no. 8 (2009).

by Germany (6.67).[119] These scores are harmonious with the percentage of re-spondents who replied affirmatively to the lottery question: 96 percent in Yu-goslavia, followed by 93 percent in Japan, and at the low end 70 percent in Germany and 69 percent in Britain. On the other hand, data reveal that the percentage of those who find their jobs very satisfactory is 16 percent in Yu-goslavia, 26 percent in Israel, and 45 percent in Netherlands, which might cor-relate with general working conditions in the countries.[120]

Reliable data on the meanings that Turkish workers attach to work are few; comparative data is even rarer. Despite its qualitative and conceptual weak-nesses, Gallup's comparative data on engagement is worth discussing in light Turkey's extreme scores.[121] Among the 142 surveyed countries, Turkey has one of the lowest scores for work engagement. The share of engaged employees in Turkey is 7 percent, just like Japan and Iran, just higher than Azerbaijan, Cro-atia, Israel, Syria, Tunisia, China, and Iraq. The percentage of the "actively dis-engaged" completes this picture; because Turkey's score of 33 percent, is only lower than Algeria, Botswana, Iran, South Africa, Syria and Tunisia. How should this data be interpreted? An economic explanation would focus on the relative misery of working conditions in Turkey (but I believe they are not as relatively bad as these scores on engagement imply). A cultural explanation, on the other hand, would focus on a supposedly weak "work ethic," which, recalling the "independent-producer Turkishmen" hypothesis, might stem from resentment against wage labor. Overall, Gallup's data on work engage-ment could be interpreted to suggest relatively low levels of job satisfaction and intrinsic meaning among Turkish employees compared with many other nations.

Looking at the 2005 results of the Fourth European Foundation Survey, Cerdeira and Kovacs offer a more reliable comparison.[122] In terms of the per-cent of those who found to be satisfied with some aspect of work and working conditions, Turkey's score of 37 is the second worst after Hungary, while the

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119   MOW-team, *The Meaning of Working*, 83.

120   Ibid., 273.

121   Gallup, "State of Global Workplace," 111-13.

122   Maria da Conceição Cerdeira and Ilona Kovács, "Job Quality in Europe: The North-South Divide," (2008).

average of thirty-one countries in the survey was 50 percent. This subjective outcome is correlated with a job quality indicator, since among all the countries, Turkey fares worst in job quality (52 percent compared to the average of 62 percent) calculated by examining many indicators. Using the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey, Tangian arrives at similar results, revealing that Turkey's scores are the worst among the thirty-one European countries with respect to working conditions, meaningfulness of work, and collegiality.[123]

There are some sector-specific articles on job satisfaction, but few of them are comparative or imply local peculiarities. Gölbaşı and his colleagues state that job satisfaction among Turkish nurses working in hospitals is similar to the global average.[124] Zeytinoğlu and his colleagues imply that because Turkey is a collectivist country, supportive relationships among co-workers might be relatively more important for job satisfaction.[125] Interestingly, by surveying both employers and employees of small and medium enterprises, Yetim and Yetim claim that factors most positively correlated with workers' job satisfaction are paternalism and collectivism in the workplace.[126]

Coşkun's study of 500 textile and 500 mine workers in Turkey provides the most pertinent and general picture for the discussion. He reports that 55 percent of mine workers and 45 percent of the textile workers are satisfied with and like doing their jobs.[127] While voicing that "very few" workers in the sample conceive of work merely as a means to earn a living, he presents workers'

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123   Andranik Tangian, "Is Work in Europe Decent? A Study Based on the 4th European Survey of Working Conditions 2005," (WSI-Diskussionspapiere, 2007).

124   Zehra Golbasi, Meral Kelleci, and Selma Dogan, "Relationships between Coping Strategies, Individual Characteristics and Job Satisfaction in a Sample of Hospital Nurses: Cross-Sectional Questionnaire Survey," *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 45, no. 12 (2008).

125   Isik Zeytinoglu et al., "Job Satisfaction, Flexible Employment and Job Security among Turkish Service Sector Workers," *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 34, no. 1 (2012).

126   Nalan Yetim and Unsal Yetim, "The Cultural Orientations of Entrepreneurs and Employees' Job Satisfaction: The Turkish Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (Smes) Case," *Social Indicators Research* 77, no. 2 (2006).

127   Mustafa Kemal Coşkun, *Sınıf, Kültür Ve Bilinç* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2012), 96.

reasons for being satisfied: "good relations with coworkers," "being productive," and "work itself."[128] He also emphasizes that younger workers tended to be more dissatisfied than older ones. Interestingly, Coşkun's data show a correlation between job satisfaction and reported willingness to participate in collective action against the management. The percentage of miners who reported they would participate in a legal strike is 45 percent among the dissatisfied, but falls to 34 percent among the satisfied. Similarly, while 57 percent of dissatisfied textile workers agree with the statement that "the rich became rich by doing injustice to others," the same percentage among the satisfied is as low as 29 percent.[129] Even though he does not question the causal relation or control for other variables, Coşkun scrutinizes the observed correlation and provides concrete data. The evidence suggests a "moderate" negative correlation between satisfaction and willingness to be resistant or critical. Especially the data on miners cautions that the correlation is moderate, far from black and white.

This review of the literature suggests that it is crucial not to impose static generalizations about how workers conceive of their jobs and the meanings they attach to work. This is a common fallacy in industrial sociology, as argued by Watson: "Work orientations" and "worker priorities" are dynamic because "every employee is likely to have different priorities at different times and in different contexts."[130] Noon and Blyton make a similar argument pointing out a static and homogenous understanding of "work ethic" that is common in the literature:

> The meanings of work are not likely to be neat and simple, … but are rather likely to be jumbled and variegated, so that any individual has a whole range of types and levels of meanings on which to draw, and with which to understand or appreciate the labour they are doing at any particular moment.[131]

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128   Ibid., 152.

129   Ibid., 153.

130   Watson, *Sociology, Work and Industry*, 188.

131   Noon and Blyton, *The Realities of Work*, 76.

Terkel points out the same ambiguity, stating that the most recurrent phrase in his interviews was "more or less," revealing "an ambiguity of attitude toward the job." "Often" he observes "something more than Orwellian acceptance" and "something less than Luddite sabotage" are fused in the same person.[132] Sennett gives another example: "as in armies so in corporations: unhappiness with an institution can coexist with strong commitment to it."[133] Butt recalls that in practice "we experience necessity, dread, fulfillment, or a range of other emotions at the thought of work – perhaps all within a single day." He concludes that work is "too important to take for granted," "too dynamic," and "too complex to be reduced to a single conceptualization."[134]

§ 3.2   Back to the Field: Four Subjectivities

Keeping that ambiguity, complexity and dynamism in mind I will discuss below, what work means for the workers with whom I formed a lasting relationship during my ethnographic research. I offer four positions mapping the continuously flowing, dissolving, and re-assembling terrain of meaning. They are the *craftsman*, the *hard worker*, the *detached survivor,* and the *despiser*. The dynamic formation of these positions and how people shift among different positions will be scrutinized, since – as Kasmir succinctly expresses – the "anthropologists' job is to document the mutable character of workers' identifications and to determine the conditions in which different identities are made."[135] The people, whose stories are shared below, are mostly unskilled workers, working long hours, earning little. Their work is an essential part of their lives in terms of time, space, and effort, but how important is it subjectively and symbolically? How do they define and interpret their long hours of dependent work? Do they feel fulfilled by their jobs, by the things they do at work? If they do, in which ways they take pride in their work? How do they

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132   Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do*, xiii.

133   Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, 36.

134   John W Budd, *The Thought of Work* (Cornell University Press, 2011), 186.

135   Kasmir, "Activism and Class Identity and at the Saturn Automobile Factory," 81.

define themselves through their work, if ever? How do these subjectivities change over time?

3.2.1 *The Craftsman*

The minority in the neighborhood who acquired a high-level skill or are proficient at a craft proud of and derive pleasure from their jobs. The relatively rare skill they somehow attained raises them to a relatively advantaged position within the capitalist labor market. The objective position has a subjective counterpart observable in their relatively high level of self-confidence in relation to their employers and - more distinctly – to the labor market that offers most İkitelli inhabitants not much more than the least. Thanks to their skill, they know that they can find a relatively good job when they need it. This relative self-confidence and precious distance from unemployment provide them an extra incentive to actively look for opportunities for upward mobility. Another product of self-confidence and possibly their relative enjoyment at work is eagerness to talk about their jobs, among the working class.

Skill stands out as the most difficult concept to "pin down" in the world of work, as Noon and Blyton note.[136] As I discussed above, skill involves politics, because material and symbolic struggles between occupational groups, classes, genders, and races define and redefine what a skill is or is not, as well as which skills are more prized. However, since my object is subjectivity, I will stick with the definition made by the capitalist labor market, itself, since subjectivity is conditioned by a structural position produced by those de facto capitalist relations. Even under capitalist hegemony, it is ambiguous how to measure and categorize skills, therefore crafts are mostly pinpointed by individually naming them. Since every worker has some sort of skill, deciding where to draw the line, separating the low from the highly skilled and craft from non-craft is problematic and itself subjective. As the major criteria of craft or of being highly-skilled in the world of manual work, Torlina emphasizes the transferability of skills to other workplaces vis-à-vis workplace specific skills.[137] Crafts have relatively high market value in the labor market, and this definition is sufficiently effective for my purposes. Even though this high

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136   Noon and Blyton, *The Realities of Work*, 115.

137   Torlina, *Working Class: Challenging Myths About Blue-Collar Labor*, 200-01.

market value does not necessarily bring an increase of wage, the crucial feature of craft lies in the relative job security it implies in the neoliberal labor market with structurally high unemployment. While we were together pensively patrolling the neighborhood on a boring and depressing evening, Mehmet, in one of his desperate and unemployed periods, chastised himself: "I am at this age with neither a skill nor an occupation."

Contrary to expectation, craft occupations employing highly-skilled workers continued to be significant in the capitalist economy constituting a relatively stable 10 percent of the labor force in advanced capitalist economies since the beginning of twentieth century.[138] These workers retain a significant degree of autonomy and control over their jobs[139] and take an "intense pride in their work."[140] Another characteristic of these workers is higher levels of resistance compared to the less skilled workers and professionals.[141] They tend to be within "the happy few who find a savor in their daily job," borrowing Terkel's turn of phrase. As I mentioned, Torlina's argument for the "inherent" satisfaction of manual work appears to be most valid for those practicing a craft, who constitute nearly 40 percent of his sample.[142] While constituting a much smaller group in the neighborhood (and the world, as well) the craftsmen I present are following: Salih, an electrician who graduated from a vocational high school; Cihan, another vocational high school graduate and a CNC router expert; Sinan, a glass worker who learned his skill via apprenticeship; and İbrahim, a recently retired cook, who spent most of his career in factories. Doğan, a young man who recently graduated from a vocational high school and found a job with a major electronics company, was just embracing and busy with acclimating himself to such a position. This group is the most "objective;" I observed that these men experience a specific objectivity, which has a marked influence on their subjectivity, an influence from which they rarely diverge. Of course, this observation is contingent on the specific context of my

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138   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 30, 142.

139   Ibid., 37.

140   Ibid., 42.

141   Ibid., 157.

142   Torlina, *Working Class: Challenging Myths About Blue-Collar Labor*.

fieldwork on the world of İkitelli with its complexity, peculiarities, and net-work of relations. In a world with a larger proportion of skilled men and women, craft might look different, less deterministic, and more varied.

Salih (1985) from Tokat is an electrician and a man exhibiting the hard-work and entrepreneurism of the so-called Protestant ethic; maybe he was the most extreme case in the neighborhood in this respect. He is a graduate of a vocational high-school, and has been working as an electrician as a contract worker in Atatürk Airport since 2009. He is feverish not only about work, but also about family: after a love affair, he married at the age of 17, had his first child at 18, followed by two other girls. Becoming a family man so early (even given the working-class norms) has reinforced his hard-working subjectivity. Salih's favorite topic is how hard working and good an electrician he is. Proud of his skills, he has even made small, practical inventions. He is also proud of having worked since he was a kid: "I have always worked since I was 8. I shined shoes at that time. You know, everybody says that they have been working since they were kids. But my story is different. I really used to work then. I used to make real money." Besides being a wage worker, he is also a self-employed electrician, and an eager participant in the land market. In the mean-time, he is a man of the community, and a member in his daughter's school council; he tries to make a name for himself by doing favors, and intends to get involved in local politics related to the *muhtarlık*. His main goal is unsur-prisingly to free himself of wage labor and become a full-time entrepreneurial electrician. He is looking to move up, relying not only on his skills and indus-try, but also on the savings of his father, a retired municipality worker. To-gether, they have built a family wealth comprising of seven apartments and several parcels of land.

I met with Cihan (1979) in an unexpected place: a conference on Islamism in Fatih held by one of the few Islamist groups to keep its distance from the AKP government. After the presentations, he took the floor in the question session and harshly criticized the speakers and organizers for being too intel-lectual, too limited to their own middle-class world, and for not paying atten-tion to the thousands like himself who work in disastrous conditions in places like İkitelli. I had to get confirmation from a friend sitting next to me to believe what I was hearing: such a scolding is not something one expects at an Islamist gathering in the Turkish context. As I became friends with Cihan, I found out

that he works in the İkitelli Organized Industrial Zone and lives in the neighborhood adjacent my own, just lying on the other side of the motorway, in an apartment I can see from my balcony. He had mastered the craft of shaping mostly metal and plastic using various, complicated computerized machines including CNC routers and lathes. Although he is a vocational school graduate, he learned these mostly self-taught skills on the shop floor advancing to a point where he uses using computer programs to make technical drawings.

Due to hardships he endured and his deeply-felt anger, Cihan is a tough man. He is the son of a tough, stingy, and industrious father, a retired stallholder in the local, open markets. In Cihan's words, his father is like "a factory," but never had a good relationship with his son. Cihan is married and has three girls, who are successful in school. He is one of the most critical workers against employers and wage work that I have ever come across in İkitelli or elsewhere. But he is also proud of his skills and likes to show them off at work, which gives him not only a subjective self-confidence, but also a power in relation to his supervisors and employers. The resentment he has towards wage labor has to do with his unique, working-class Islamism, which he picked up from an ex-coworker who later became a comrade. They used to be "three people, as one of Ahmet Kaya's songs says," as Cihan likes to put it, but the third left them. His resentment forced him to think deeply about how to solve the problem of being a wage worker, and he decided to develop his craft as a way out. He "achieved this to a certain extent" such that in 2004 he became a foreman: "not a foreman who lets himself be used as a tool to oppress people in the shop floor, but a foreman who regulates the benches, the machines." In his current workshop, which employs ten to fifteen people, he reports that he is the one who actually runs the production. However, this relief is negligible, as he still feels chained and exploited both because of the long working hours and mostly because he works under command. Both politically and instinctively, he desires to establish his own business with people he can trust in a form of partnership that would be an alternative model to capitalism.

He has many stories to express his "mastery," how he "öttürmek"[143] the bench and how he manages to turn the symbolic hierarchy with his supervisors upside down. In a factory where he had just begun as a foreman, he was asked to reduce the production time of a certain item. He was told the engineer had recently worked on the operation and reduced the time from 40 minutes to 30. By dismantling and reassembling the machine and making some corresponding adjustments to the software, he reduced the time to 14 minutes. "When he heard this, the boss literally jumped from his chair" as he recalls. In the same factory, the production manager once tried to boss him around. "Fighting fire with fire,"[144] Cihan brags about his reaction: "Who are you to boss me? Know your place! How much is your salary? What do you know to boss me?" He explains the reason for his immunity: "They had to endure me, because the boss knew that I was the one who can handle the production in the best way possible. I was the one who prepared the operation drawings for new products. The production manager couldn't even understand the stuff I drew."

Sinan (1975) from Sinop is a glass worker, proud of his craft, and enjoys telling the details of his work whenever he detects interest. Yet, he is not industrious; this is not a, pronounced component of his identity. He is more a man of joy, fun, and leisure. We met because we were neighbors. Selim, who was the center of the social life of our building, gathered his neighbors in his apartment often in the evenings. Sinan normally does not discuss work, rather prefers to talk about women, tees, and tell jokes. That is why it took me a while to recognize his pride in his work, which I realized when we once had a long talk. He is a skilled glass worker, enjoys te craftsmanship, works unionized, and has a critical consciousness with respect to employers. He had a lot to tell about his work, which is hard, requiring eight hours of standing up and moving around a hot oven: "When you work with glass you cannot easily say that you are a master because mastery always changes. There is always a new model to come." And he explains his philosophy of work as follows: "you have to like

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143   A term, that here roughly means to use something so well that it literally began speaking for itself out of enjoyment and admiration.

144   He actually says "anlayacağı dilden konuştum."

your job; if you do a job without liking it, it will become difficult for you, and you cannot do it."[145]

Sinan talks about self-fulfillment on accunt of its returns:

> When I left my village, I was a poor man (*gariban*); at times I was even in need of bread. I am telling the truth. I would never believe it if some-one would have told me that "you'll go to Istanbul and will own an apartment." ... When you work, you can come to a certain level, Allah gives it. ... I could get a job in this factory, but I had strived for it a lot. For almost for ten years I applied and applied.

When he was fourteen, he lost his father and was left with his mother and four sisters, which made life hard for him. Sinan was a neighbor in the second of the apartments I rented, and he was clearly admired by the other neighbors due to his relatively well-paid, unionized job until the German employer decided to close the plant in the summer of 2011. In two months, he found another job in his occupation, though less well-paid, non-unionized, and at a plant further away. It was still better compared to the neighbors' jobs, which was another sign that skill makes a difference. However, at the beginning of 2012, he was fired along with his coworkers due to a costly production error. Sinan claimed that who was responsible of this error was actually their foreman.

Finding himself unexpectedly unemployed, he decided to risk the worker's dream. With the encouragement of his brother-in-law, who has been a driver, Sinan decided to become a self-employed driver and bought a minibus. Because he had no savings, he obtained a credit line of 54 thousand TL from the bank to buy the minibus and begin working for the firm for which his brother-in-law was working. At first, he was pleased with the new job, especially about "being his own boss." After a while, though, he started to complain about the long hours and lack of annual leave. At the end of two and a half years as a petty entrepreneur, he gave up. He was not making enough money to both make a living and pay back the credit, even though his wife had begun working as a laborer in a print shop due to the familial financial crisis. He again, quickly found a job in a glass factory with relatively better

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145 "Bir işi seveceksin, bir işi sevmeden yaparsan o sana zor gelir, yapamazsın."

conditions, reporting that after two stressful years he finally has "peace of mind" – the worker's blessing, as many entrepreneur (and workers who hesitate to become entrepreneurs) will claim.

İbrahim (1954) from Giresun is a recently retired cook, a job, which while it might seem not complicated, is actually one of the oldest crafts. He began to work as an apprentice at 13 in a restaurant in a town near his village, and he kept doing this work in factory cafeterias after migrating to Istanbul. His job involves more autonomy, more job security, and apparently more intrinsic satisfaction than average in İkitelli. Like the other craftsmen, İbrahim is content with and proud of having a craft:

> I had never worked in a catering firm. I had always cook the food from beginning to end and serve people by myself. … Sometimes people say: "Watch out, the boss is coming!" I never prepare myself, he will wear a six meter cloth [a shroud] just as I will. I never concerned about looking good to the boss. If you do your job well, if you are good at your occupation, your place will be secure.

Doğan (1988), a young, taciturn man is at the threshold of this subjectivity. As a vocational high school graduate who recently finished his military service, Doğan found a job in a major, Turkish electronics company, a company for which Turkish workers dream to work, as noted by Nichols and Sugur.[146] He was the son of one of my neighbors, who happened to be from Edirne, and therefore my *hemseri*. Doğan had a different habitus than the average, local young man of his age: he was more disciplined and middle-classy. He had less contact with the street and the youth of the neighborhood, except for a couple friends with whom he hangs out. His self-discipline is recognized by his parents and other neighbors, especially by the mothers of less-disciplined boys. Because he is taciturn and has only just begun to work, I did not hear much from him about his job without directly asking. But I imagine he will become a model "the hard worker" and – if no misfortune is brought upon him – "craftsman" as well.

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146 Theo Nichols and Nadir Sugur, *Global Management, Local Labour: Turkish Workers and Modern Industry* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

These five men acquired a craft, thanks to their self-discipline, hard work, and some degree of chance. Their jobs bring relatively more intrinsic meaning, pride, economic returns, and security, of which they are aware and which they appreciate. They express a certain sense of fulfillment and build self-confidence through the performance of their jobs. Their levels of mastery of their respective crafts differ, as do their objective and subjective positions, but they all enjoy a certain status that is relatively high in the context of my fieldwork. All of them were once "hard workers" like those I will present next, and their hard-working spirit led these men to obtain their craft. Some may have even once somewhere been a "detached survivor" or "despiser." As I mentioned, even Cihan feels despised from time to time, despite his high level of mastery compared even to the standards of other craftsman. However, this feeling is not the one that defines his subjectivity at work. It has long ago been overcome by his pride in his craft. But Cihan thinks that truthfully, his relief and pride are superficial: it has meaning only relative to the misery of the unskilled worker, to a curse that many people around him suffer, just as he once did. Nevertheless, in daily life he rightfully focuses on the ladders he has climbed, and he enjoys his success.

On the other hand, resentment toward wage work even in the form of craft – or simply the desire for better income – leads some craftsmen to entrepreneurism. This dream of the wage worker is relatively more accessible to them craftsmen due to their skill. Salih can become an entrepreneur directly through his craft, which is ideal; to become a self-employed electrician requires little capital investment. Self-confidence and relative financial security earned through the practice of craft led Sinan to try, though the story ends in failure. However, the fact that the failure did not spell financial catastrophe is again related to his craft, which allowed him to easily return to relatively decent wage work. Cihan reports that with his mastery of his craft, he could easily build his own enterprise if he were immoral enough to live with the exploitation of others. His political vision to establish liberating, self-managed enterprises complicates and suspends his escape from wage labor. But he has not yet given up. These men are members of a small, privileged group in the neighborhood. As workers coming from a socio-economic origin more or less similar to their neighbors, they serve as examples of the possibility of climbing into a steady position in the volatile, neoliberal labor market.

3.2.2   *The Hard Worker*

I call the second group the "hard worker." They are distinct from craftsmen because they do not have a particular skill of craft knowledge that is "transferable" to another workplace.[147] On the other hand, what distinguishes the hard worker from the third group to follow is their prominent pride and identification with their work. I do not call them hard workers because they are the only ones who work hard. Many others, the majority among İkitelli residents, work hard. My "hard workers" claim and embrace – although not necessarily in an explicit way – a hard-working identity. They express a high level of work centrality, which is observable in the fact they like to talk about their jobs, show their pride, and relate their relative success. They are moderately at peace with and proud of their working identity, performance, and trajectory. Beyond discontent with their jobs, they find a "daily meaning" similar to the "articulate" of Terkel' study, who "murmur of a hunger for 'beauty', 'a meaning,' 'a sense of pride.'"[148] They correspons to the "conformists," in Willis' study who are "much more likely to believe in the possibility of satisfaction in work" and who "see their own values and achievements expressed through the intrinsic properties of work activity."[149] They clearly have higher levels of work centrality, satisfaction, engagement, and intrinsic meaning than average, just like the craftsman.

Unlike craftsmen, this group and the two that follow are defined by their subjective condition. Even though they have neither a craft nor a high level of skill, years of working at the same workplace or in the same job have given them the habit of hard work and an embedded, local skill. Most importantly, their defining feature is that they *enjoy* these to a certain degree. This subjectivity is linked to an objective situation: they tend to enjoy a slightly better position relative to others in the same workplace. It is futile to try to dissect the direction of the causal relation. Is it because they somehow become better off that they embrace and identify with their jobs, or is it because they are

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147   Torlina, *Working Class: Challenging Myths About Blue-Collar Labor.*

148   Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do.*

149   Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, 194.

engaged and hardworking that they get recognized and promoted? In any event, there is a correlation between the hard worker and seniority. Indeed, Geniş finds that seniority and experience are the most important factors determining wage differences among small-scale industry workers.[150] But obviously, all seniors are not hard workers, and there can be hard-workers among youth, though I did not come across an example.[151] Although there are contradictory findings,[152] work centrality appears to increase with age "which may provide one explanation as to why older people believe that their work ethic is greater than the next generation."[153] Sennett points out that young workers tend to have relatively looser bonds to their jobs[154] and Coşkun notes that in his sample of Turkish manual workers, the young tend to be less satisfied with their jobs.[155]

Hard workers Nafız, Fethi, Cengiz, and – with some idiosyncrasies – Adil, are all middle-aged men, similar in their perceptions and attitudes towards their jobs. They all have pride in their hardworking and skilled subjectivities at work. These qualities are gained over years of solid work at the same workplace or sector, which gave them the opportunity to move up in the internal labor markets of their workplaces providing them with relatively steady, secure, and slightly higher-paying jobs. They all like to talk about their work and their relations at work; behind the exploitative and oppressive relations, they are important at work, respected in the eyes of both their employers/supervisors and coworkers for their know-how. Sema and Sevil, two middle-aged women, are also hard workers in their own way. They are less chatty about, but they indeed have that same pride. They do not work at jobs with an internal labor market, so they had neither the chance to move up at a job, nor do they

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150   Geniş, *Işç Sınıfının Kıyısında*, 223.

151   It should be kept in mind that I focus more on "fathers," which means that my observations about youth are limited.

152   Jung, Moon, and Hahm, "Do Age, Gender, and Sector Affect Job Satisfaction? Results from the Korean Labor and Income Panel Data."

153   Bain et al., *The Meaning of Work in the New Economy*, 16.

154   Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, 96.

155   Coşkun, *Sınıf, Kültür Ve Bilinç*, 96.

have coworker comparing themselves to them. However, they value their current position compared with their former jobs and enjoy a level of job security due to hard work recognized by their employers.

Nafız (1971), a bachelor, is my protagonist Mehmet's best friend since they met in the gum factory. He is from Elazığ, an eastern province, and a Zaza. When asked he is precise, he is Zaza, "not Kurdish". Although he has a wide network of relatives in the neighborhood, he hangs around mostly with his coworkers – Mehmet and others – another sign of his work centrality. I have known Nafız since 2007 and his favorite topic has always been his work, what he does at work, the relations with coworkers and supervisors etc. He always has some stories to tell. He is a hard-working and dexterous man, facts he grows to talk about and which many of his coworkers confirm. After working nearly for ten years in the garment sector in small workshops, he got into the gum factory on account of a relative. Nafız worked there for ten years, until the factory's relocation outside Istanbul. He was close to becoming a foreman, but he could not because he does not have a high school diploma, a strict requirement of the management for foremen. In one of our long interviews he explained his attitude towards his work in the gum factory as follows:

— Nafız: We[156] didn't hurt anyone. We did the work they gave us; we did even more than that. All of the supervisors, foremen, managers… they were all content with us. … They used to thank us. Whenever a new machine arrived in the factory, they used to call me right away [to learn it and set it up] ... We used to internalize the work as our own business, not as a stranger's.

— *Why is that?*

— Because you like the work. Sometimes you like the work and you internalize it as if it is yours. We didn't say "this is that man's [the employer's] business, fuck it, never mind!" That's why we had quarrels with some friends in our department. For example, you work with ten people, a friend shirks his work, then what happens? You have to do his par; nine people do the work

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156   "We" means here almost "I." This is a popular usage in Turkish if you do not want to sound individualistic or self-congratulatory.

of ten. That's not good; it causes a disturbance. "My brother, we should do equal work!" He answers: "Are you the one gonna save the company?"

— *How did you answer that?*

— Nothing. I worked there for ten years. I never made a complaint [to the management] about any of my friends. I was always made responsible in the departments I worked, not officially, but I was influential.

He was indeed. Although he internalizes his work as if it was his own, he was heavily involved in the energetic unionization struggle of 2007-08, which I witnessed, investigated, and in which I engaged. Since he was influential and respected in his department, he used that influence to mobilize his coworkers and became one of the leaders of the struggle in his shift. He was even considered a popular candidate for the chief shop-stewardship. He wasn't interested, because shop stewards were appointed by the union branch leader rather than chosen by workers. He was against that pol'cy and very critical of the union branch chief for other reasons, as well.

After quitting the gum factory and a seven-months job search, Nafız found a good position as a machine operator job in a unionized food factory in June 2011. He tried out work in many workplaces during his unemployment, but could not find an appealing job. He could endure such a long period because he is a bachelor living with his mother and older brother, also a bachelor. Soon after securing employment, he was again ready to chronicle how quickly he learned the new machines, how hard he works, and how much he produces. After a little longer than a year, his hard workparid off: Nafız became a low-level foreman responsible for five other people in his unit.

For Nafız, the subjective consequences of the labor mobilization of 2007-08 are complicated but generally more positive than for Mehmet. He has maintained his relations and solidarity with former coworkers, and as a consequence, nearly twenty friends from the gum factory began working with him in his new factory. Nafız and others report that this group is the most engaged in the new workplace in terms of union activities and defending workers' rights on a daily basis. Two of his friends from the gum factory, who were union representatives, also became representatives in the new factory.

This is a promising, positive finding with regard to the subjective consequences of the mobilization through which they had lived. His friends actually asked Nafız to become a representative, but again he declined. This time his reason was his new position; he felt as a foreman it would be "a little weird" for him to become a union representative. There is always a dilemma, a "danger" waiting for the hard worker who is assertive about his rights and in solidarity with his coworkers: they can be co-opted by management. After years of skillful performance at work, Nafız may be on the cusp of such co-optation; however, it is not inevitable.

Fethi (1961) was my first landlord, a family man who lost his left hand in a work accident in 1978, but kept working in the same workplace through the present. The story is tragic, but so much time is past that he has gotten used to it. He is a happy and funny family man: a caring father of three, carrying the burdens of his family. Fethi used to spend a lot ot time out drinking alcohol, but stopped after the Istanbul earthquake of 1999, becaming a pious man who performs *namaz* five times a day. He is helpful and honest, and we became quite close. He was without a doubt the best landlord I have had during my long career as a tenant.

Fethi complains incessantly about his work and boss, of whom he is extremely critical. But this does not negate the fact that he likes to talk about his work and is proud of it. He works in a small factory producing brand name toothbrushes and employing less than forty workers merely in the production. His job is to operate the machine that threads the bristles into the shank. It involves constant movement, as the machine requires the operator's intervention at three different points. He has observed that the pace of work has risen throughout the years. He recalls that he used to be a troublemaker for the employer until the 2000s. Workers in the firm tried twice to unionize and in the latter campaign he was one of the leaders, but they were unsuccessful and he became pessimistic with respect to his coworkers. When he wants to point out his industry, he quotes his boss, who used to say: "All problems [related to workers' resistance] are somehow linked to you. I don't like your thinking, but I like your working." Fethi concludes by saying: "I am not praising myself, I am just quoting him." Nowadays his employer teases him: "You really used to be a terrorist, didn't you?" Another story he often tells is about an investigation by the international firm for which the factory produces. The investigators

mentioned several times their fascination with the performance of a man with such a major disability.

As one of the most experienced workers in the factory, Fethi is also responsible for fixing the machines or retooling them for ne product designst. His son Fatih (1986), whose involvement in *quest.net* I mentioned in the previous chapter, worked for one day in his father's factory but gave up saying, "this job is too tiring." Fethi counters "our work is unrelenting, tiring, but I have to endure; this is the struggle for bread, for our children." When I ask him if there is a time of year where the pace of work slows a little, his answer was specific: "Only during the 1991 Gulf Crisis our work slowed down for a while, but that's all." Why did not Fethi quit working if the job is so tiring and the employer so oppressive? He has a convincing answer: "I could not work anywhere else in this situation [implying his disability]. And there are not many firms in our sector, it is a small one."

Because of his handicap he had the right to retire long ago, but the retirement wage was low, the likelihood of his sons standing on their own two feet – was not promising, and he was still supporting his daughter financially, who had married and returned to their hometown of Giresun. This industrious man's final goal is to pay her primums and make his wife to be entitled to pensions. One reason that he became attached to and satisfied with his job may simply be that he has been doing it for so long. This may sound uncanny, but paradoxes are common human experience. This idea occurred to me on a summer afternoon – a public holiday (August 30) – when I returned home from some outing and found Fethi and Fatih sitting in front of our apartment building on a short wall: a nice spot with a view of two streets from the corner, where our neighbors often hang out. Father and son were simply bored. Fethi said, "My friend, how weird it is, isn't it? You go to work and get bored; then there is a holiday, and you get bored." Of course, their actual problem was financial. Because they could reserve little for leisure activities and had to sell their car long ago, they were stuck. They could have planned some moderate activity, but somehow did not. Fethi then experienced one of the worst dilemmas – or fears – of the hard worker: a version of workaholism.

Cengiz (1966) is from a village of Samsun, Havza. Those originating from Havza constitute the largest community in the neighborhood, so Cengiz enjoys a large social network. He is pious, performs *namaz* five times a day, but

even though he is friends with many "Islamists" in the neighborhood, he does not favor their cause. I made meet Cengiz through Fatih's (Fethi's son) cousin, also named Cengiz, whom I henceforth call Cengiz-the-young. Both Cengizs were working at the same factory. The reason Cengiz-the-young wanted me to meet Cengiz was for me to advise him about a modest resistance they were performing against their employer, a story I tell in the next chapter. Cengiz migrated to İkitelli from his village in 1990 and worked ever since as a powder painter in a factory producing ovens and electrical heaters. He became a master of his trade over the years, was a favorite among his supervisors, and earned a relatively good wage (nearly 1.400 TL monthly, which is twice times minimum wage). He often expresses his pride and contentment with his job:

— Is your job hard? Do you get bored?
— Believe me I am a work lover. I am very attached to my work. I enjoy working, that's the weird thing. In the mornings some people wish the time to pass fast so they can go back home. My friend, what will you do when evening comes and you leave? How will you earn money? You should work to earn [it]. If he [the employer] makes money, you make money. Can he give you anything without earning money? If you were an employer would you give [money away]? I am at odds with the people complaining in the mornings. We should say bismillah and start working.

One should not exaggerate his sympathy for his employer, though. He can be critical and angry, which involves not only swearing at the employer from time to time, but also engaging in actions of resistance, like a failed unionization attempt in 2006 or a recent submission of a collective petition to the Ministry of Labor about the employer's malpractice – the case Cengiz-the-young asked my opinion. A specific feature of his job that strengthens his contentmentis that his retirement premiums are paid in proportion to his wage. That is a rare "privilege" in Turkey, because these premiums are usually paid as if workers earn minimum wage, regardless of their actual wages, which causes their eventual retirement pensions to be low.

Thanks to his experience and competence, Cengiz controls his pace of work to an extent so that he can take small breaks each hour:

If you act wisely, you don't get oppressed. For example, you can find the easy way to do a certain task... You have to process a certain amount of product. If you do it consciously, you neither become tired, nor do you delay production… I figure out how I can quickly process the product, and then leave. If it takes 45 minutes for me to process the amount of product requested for one hour, I can take a 15 minute break.

Lamont describes the same phenomenon: "the mastering of work, and work speed in particular, is one of the means unskilled workers have to gain a sense of autonomy and control in the workplace."[157]

But Cengiz's "love" for his work should not be exaggerated. He was looking forward to the right to retire, and planned to buy a small van and become a self-employed driver in the personnel transportation business, like Sinan. When I reminded him how he talks all the time about how much he likes his job, he replied, "I have had enough of *stranger's business*." Later Cengiz reconsiderd his plans; instead, he took advantage of close relations with the pious community and took over the teahouse at the neighborhood mosque, a moderate but stable business.

The last man I will mention in this category is Adil (1965), Mehmet's brother. As mentioned before, Adil accepted a custodial job offered by the owner of a building on whose construction he and Mehmet had worked in 1993. Adil worked in that firm, which produces and trades watches, ever since and worked his way up from janitor to building superintendent. Unlike Fethi, Nafız, and Cengiz, Adil is not talkative about his work, possibly because of his generally reticent nature (he is not particularly talkative about anything). However, when it comes to identifying himself with his work – his contentment with it and pride about it – he is much like the other. Also, the way he acquired a steady, fairly well-paying job by working hard for years for the same employer or in the same job is also similar to the others. He is *the* superintendent of the firm's headquarters and his employer trusts him. Previously, Mehmet told me admiringly that Adil has a good job, his employer likes him,

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157 Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*, 26.

and trusts him. He has the keys to the building and most of the safes in it. I met Adil when we were in their village in Samsun during the harvest, and I realized that his coworkers and manager called several times to ask about details of the firm's day to day operations. Yeter, his wife, was proud of him: "They always call him, they can't do anything without him." Adil agreeing and enjoying being needed. He is indeed proud of his job. Even though he does not talk about it, when the subject comes up he takes the chance to mention that things can't function without him: he is responsible of everything within the building.

Adil is the father of two sons. Both were nearly 18 and one is handicapped having serious problems with speaking and walking. He is politically more authoritarian and right-wing compared to his brother, Mehmet. Since I spent a lot of time with Adil and his family, I had the chance to observe that Adil's work hours are irregular: he sometimes leaves the firm very late, and even has to go on some Sundays. Yeter, his wife, can also be critical about his work, especially about the hours. She blames Adil from time to time. Adil was called to open the building on a Sunday to monitor the delivery of new furniture and returned home late. Yeter's feeling far from pride this time; she was upset with Adil's compliance, even teasing him: "Today is a holiday, yet even today they call him: 'Adil, furniture is coming…' and he stays there for hours. They will hang your picture there!"[158]

Koray, his son, was also critical about his father's employer and long hours: "They always call my father, even at inappropriate times: 'There is this, there is that to do.' There were times I did not see my father for two days." Adil rarely agrees with these complaints and that evening answered Koray: "My son, to be a superintendent is not an easy job." Adil is not talkative as he also admits. I never spoke with him for long, but I observed that he does not like being at home anyway. He is one of those coffeehouse men who like spending their spare time leisurely playing games. Maybe his handicapped son, or other things pull him out of the home. As such, spending long hours at work may not be a real burden for him. I never heard a negative word from Adil about his employer; he always praises the fact that the employer "gives bread" to so

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158   She teases with Adil since he often sacrifices and complies even though he gets nothing special in return.

many people. Adil is a perfect example of how being attached to work may suggest compliance to an employer. I even heard unpleasant claims that he is a "flatter," does whatever the boss asks, and even provoked the firing of a coworker. These claims were impossible to confirm and may be gossip, but they reveal how he is perceived at work.

In many studies, women appear less work-centered compared to male counterparts, and we can assume that this influences their pride in and identification with their jobs. Obviously, this generalization is related to the higher representation of women in part-time and insecure labor;[159] research indicates that work centrality may be even higher for women working full time.[160] Nevertheless, it is clear that "the moral obligation to be work centered is imposed more upon men than women."[161] Coşkun states that fully half of the female textile workers he surveyed report that they like their jobs.[162] Those who work in small workshops hold more negative compared to those working in factories, where working conditions are better and there is more distance from the restrictive social milieu of the neighborhood. For women working in Sri Lankan export processing zones, Gunawardana reports optimistically that "despite the stress and degradation of the factory system, women reported feeling pride in their work and empowered through earning an independent income."[163]

Drawing on Siegelbaum, Sennett points out a subtler factor, which might condition women to ostensibly care less about "the dignity afforded by work."[164] Because "to do so would challenge sex roles in the family," working-class women tend not to "share the importance of their work with their spouses," nor with others, I would add. It is a tactic of not symbolically challenging the patriarchy at home. Another factor for some women may be the

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159   Bain et al., *The Meaning of Work in the New Economy*, 16.

160   Noon and Blyton, *The Realities of Work*, 135.

161   Ibid., 62.

162   Coşkun, *Sınıf, Kültür Ve Bilinç*.

163   Samanthi Gunawardana, "Struggle, Perseverance and Organization in Sri Lanka's Export Processing Zones," in *Global Unions: Challenging Transnational Capital through Cross-Border Campaigns*, ed. Kate Bronfenbrenner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 81.

164   Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, 73.

desire to assert and affirm their womanhood as distinct from men,[165] which is not necessarily an act of self-subjugation. As Weeks underscores

> gendering of work – doing men's work or women's work, doing masculinity or femininity as part of doing the job – can also be a source of pleasure in work and serve to promote workers' identification with and investments in the job.[166]

Thus, just like hard working men, hard working women are also gendered, and their gendered differences should not mislead the observer. They each identify with and are proud of their work in their own particular ways. Indeed, work is so deeply gendered that many researchers[167] prefer scrutinizing the deeper meanings men and women attach to work separately. I prefer to focus on the commonalities, which are worth exploration. Sema and Sevil are less talkative, less forthright, a little confused, and a little uneasy about their pride and identification with work, yet these are present.

I told Sema's story in the previous chapter. Sema, Mehmet's wife, has been working as a cleaner and cook in the nearby shop of an upscale furniture brand since 2008. She has had experience in various work contexts, including a factory, workshops, piecework at home, and in a hospital as a janitor. Her lastest job is also low-paying, albeit slightly more than minimum wage. It is easier compared to previous jobs and more importantly, she says it is relatively decent and secure. She received her wage on time even during the financial crisis, a rarity in İkitelli. She is also proud of being able to request an advance when she needs it. She had good relationships with almost every coworker in the shop. The woman who worked her position before had not provided tea and food to the porters, but Sema began giving them tea and even food, when there

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165   Julie A. Matthaei, *An Economic History of Women in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), 133.

166   Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*, 10.

167   For example, Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*; Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*; Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*; Torlina, *Working Class: Challenging Myths About Blue-Collar Labor*.

were leftovers. She made new friends with whom they began to meet as couples. Her job provides her new friendships, a new space, and a sense of pride and control:

> I do not know many people here [in the neighborhood]. What would I do if I sat at home, sitting here, sitting there; the time would pass very slowly. My workplace is secure, a good one. I have a place there, just like here.[168] People come saying 'sister we are hungry.' I prepare food for them. Only in the mornings I tidy up the store, afterwards I am at my station. I also make and serve tea. If you come [there], I can host and feed you.

I only had chance to talk with Sema together with Mehmet. In that context, she is not forthcoming about her job, and I observed that the two of them do not talk about either. Mehmet did not even know her exact wage, nor that there was no dishwasher in the shop (dishwashing is a significant part of her daily work). Since her job description is similar to domestic labor, she discounts the value of her labor saying, "it is an easy job." However, when asked and invited to explain, she expresses specific pride:

> When Mehmet was sick, I took a day off, so I didn't go to work for two successive days. When I came in the next morning there was not space on the kitchen table to even put a fork. It was so messy. Then I realized the importance of my labor.
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> On one of my days off the boss said to one of the salesgirls "today is the sister's off day, please mop the floor." Our cleaning equipment is kind of heavy, to ringing it out is not easy, and you have to push hard. The girl couldn't do it and the floor was left wet and dirty. When the boss saw it, he said to the girl "you couldn't manage, give it to me." But he also couldn't do it as well as I do. I cleaned up the mess next day.

She is the only janitor in the shop, which employs some 15 salespeople, porters, and installers; there is no internal labor market she can climb. However, she has become one of the three most senior employees in the shop, which has a

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168   We were at her kitchen during that discussion.

high turnover due to poor working conditions, especially for porters and in-stallers. On the other hand, Sema is a hard worker, assertive about her rights and critical of her boss. Her sense of injustice has developed together with her self-confidence over the long years in her job. Or it was always present, but we needed that time to make her feel sufficiently comfortable to share her real feelings with me. For the last few years, when I ask Sema about her work her standard answer is similar to Fethi's: "Things are good for the bosses, but we make no progress." In our last chat, she was more reactive:

> Things are great for the bosses. Both got new cars, two… what are they called? Ha, BMWs. On the other hand, the [end of the] year is coming, the time for wage increases. So they begin saying that things are not good, sales are declining… I told the accountant that I want a raise of 150 lira, but he says bosses will give a maximum of 50 lira.

Another thing Sema gained from her job is a powerful position in relation to her husband; a fact I witnessed and often heard Mehmet complain about. This has been discussed in the previous chapter.

Mehmet's youngest sibling, Sevil (1974) had a harder life. She dealt with numerous misfortunes: an oppressive mother-in-law, the loss of her third child, abandonment by her husband, and the huge debt he left her. In 1994 Sevil visited her brother Adil and his wife, Yeter, and decided to stay and work in İkitelli. Adil encouraged her to stay and earn her dowry. While working in a textile factory, a man working in the same place and living in the adjacent apartment, wanted to marry her. It was an arranged marriage, and she recalls the only thing she was asked was if she had someone else in mind. After the marriage in 1996, her jealous husband made her quit her job; however, an op-pressive mother-in-law and Sevil's self-determination that her to start work-ing again, this time in a nearby socks workshop. She quit in 1998 in advance of giving birth to her first child. The loss of her third child, a girl, in 2002 was devastating for her, but she had to move on. In 2004 when the couple bought a minibus with bank credit in Sevil's name, it did not seem that her husband was on the cusp of leaving. But in 2005 he abandoned Sevil and their two boys and began living with another woman. He rarely shows up to see the boys and provides only modest and irregular financial support.

Since 2005, Sevil is a single, working mother. Adil and Mehmet support her, but at a level that seemed moderate to me (an issue I dared not investigate). Sevil always said she is appreciative, but what else she would say to a friend of her brothers. She went back as a production worker in a shoe workshop, an informal job that payed weekly, but she had no choice at the time. She remembers that they liked her work and the wage was actually not that bad. After five years of work she asked for he social security premiums to be paid, but the employers were adamant that they would not do it. After a couple of months of searching and casual work, she found job as a janitor in a school for handicapped children, where she is still working today. She recalls that her first wage from the school was half of what she earned in the workshop, but the social security was worth it.

Looking at her life story, it is no surprise that work is central for Sevil, and that she is engaged and has pride in it. When she first came to Istanbul, when she rebelled against her mother-in-law, and when she was compelled to earn a living by herself for her two sons, work was her vehicle. She likes to emphasize that she is responsible for the whole of the school: she is the one who opens it up in the morning and keeps the building operating.

During her second year there an incident I first heard from her in 2010 and would hear several times again. One of the teachers disliked her and wanted to replace her. The teacher even talked with the staff manager to arrange it. The rumor spread within the school, and in response, three teachers came forward and told the manager that they would leave if the management laid Sevil off. She kept the job, but she stresses, she stopped greeting that teacher. With self-confidence and contentment, she believes her place is "secure" and that people like her:

> I am satisfied with my job. They are satisfied with me, and I am satisfied with them. We have been working together five years. I never heard a criticism, a bad word from them. If I do, I will leave immediately.

Due to her hard work and attachment, she reinforces her self-confidence even with respect to her employers, so that she can say she would not endure even a bad word from them. She supports this narrative with an incident from her first work experience in a workshop in 1994:

> I worked there one and a half months. But I quit because of something I heard, something I couldn't tolerate. One of the foremen said "animal" to a worker next to me. I resented it and went to the accountant to quit. He asked me why, and I explained. He said it wasn't to you, why do you take it personally? I said, I can't tolerate something like that in exchange for working so hard.

Independent of the accuracy of her stories, the fact that she recalls that event from 1994 reveals the importance she attaches to work, the pride she feels, and the respect she demands in return. Her explicit sensitivity about "the dignity afforded by work" is related to the fact that she has less concern about challenging familial sex roles. Indeed, being a single mother of two sons who provides for her family through wage labor with "honor," might be her sex role, explaining her explicitness. However, there are constraints; I realized that she was more eager to talk about her work experience, when her brothers were not around.

These were the hard-workers I came across. They are explicitly proud of their hard work, expressing a certain level of attachment and satisfaction, and exhibiting a subjectivity described by Hodson, Torlina, and many other pro-labor sociologists of work. They resemble the workers in Manchester investigated by Savage and his colleagues, who have a moderate "pride in possessing manual, practical skills that earned them not only a living but also degrees of self-respect."[169] In the harsh working conditions of neoliberal capitalism, it might seem tempting for so-called unskilled workers to leave work at work and avoid thinking and talking about it. However, if one discounts the assumption that manual labor is inherently meaningless and that industriousness and attachment to work can only grow out of deference, the researcher will see the possibility of satisfaction from unskilled manual work, despite the oppressive and exploitative conditions in which it is embedded. Some workers choose to enjoy and embrace that possibility, without necessarily being content with their working conditions or with their employers.

As a matter of fact, all of the hard workers above except Adil expressed criticism about supervisors and employers; for Fethi, Nafız, and Cengiz, they

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169   Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst, "Local Habitus and Working-Class Culture," 120.

had experiences of organized resistance in their pasts. In fact, these three men reveal similar subjectivities related to work in terms of both hard work and criticism. Fethi complains more, but the fact that he is older partially accounts for this divergence. I am pointing out the hard workers' degree of criticism to question the correlation between attachment and docility. Adil's story clearly reveals that that correlation holds true for some. Nafız also seems to come close to the edge, where he might turn to the side of management. Sema and Sevil seem to be low-profile hard workers, but this is untrue: they are proactive in their own gendered ways. The norm for them is not the same as the standard for male. I argue that their cases are less obvious, not because they are any less hard workers, rather because as females they are more constrained in terms of the labor market as well as self-expression.

The hard worker is not a character, but a subjectivity. In practice "we experience necessity, dread, fulfillment, or a range of other emotions at the thought of work – perhaps all within a single day."[170] Hard workers can easily become detached, and the detached can easily become hard worker. Expressing criticism towards his boss and his working conditions (with some self-pity thrown in), Fethi might sometimes sound like a despiser. But I believe this tone, which surfaces from time to time, stems from his lost hand and the other things he lost with it, as well as his torment about having to work at the same workplace where that loss took place. However, despite his physical condition that predisposes him to be a despiser, he has overcome it with pride crafted from hard work and a compulsion to be a good man. It is no surprise that some version of self-pity surfaces from time to time only to disappear soon after. Sema seemed detached at her previous job, as a hospital janitor, which was stressful and exhaustive. Cengiz was moderatly of detached during the final months of his employment, when he was arranging his petty business and counting the days. Looking at some among the detached who seem that they used to be hard workers, it is arguable that hard workers tend to get detach and get tired of the march forward in the years approaching retirement.

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170   Budd, *The Thought of Work*, 186.

3.2.3   *The Detached Survivor*

In between those who deliberately dislike their jobs and the hard workers that is neither content nor particularly displeased about the work they do – who feel neither pride nor despised with respect to their jobs. They have given up the "murmur of a hunger for 'beauty', 'a meaning,' 'a sense of pride'" from work and they exhibit "a hardly concealed discontent" as those in Terkel's[171] most populous group, but this feeling is not pronounced. They have relatively low work centrality and engagement, and their levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction are moderate. They do not enjoy talking about their jobs, which are anyway not an essential factor in their identities. They are detached survivors, because in terms of finding meaning in or satisfaction from work, they survive – no more, no less.

Their "secret self-accusation"[172] is stronger compared to those in the groups above. They recall Willis' lads, who "retrench to the absolute minimum of personal meanings in work,"[173] for whom "satisfaction is not expected in work."[174] If any, their satisfactions are too "relative" to mention, as Burawoy interprets.[175] They turn to other spheres of life to find satisfaction and identification, whether it be to companions outside work,[176] colleagues at work,[177] family,[178] consumption,[179] or more generally "life outside work … to escape the humiliations and constraints" of work.[180]

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171   Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do.*

172   Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, 256.

173   Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, 105.

174   Ibid., 102.

175   Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism*, 78.

176   Liebow, *Tally's Corner, a Study of Negro Streercorner*, 38.

177   Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, 100.

178   Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*, 30.

179   Kefalas, *Working-Class Heroes: Protecting Home, Community, and Nation in a Chicago Neighborhood*, 171.

180   Halle, *America's Working Man: Work, Home, and Politics among Blue Collar Property Owners*, 295.

This group is the most heterogeneous and populous: It includes those who used to or could have been hard workers, who became detached from their immediate jobs for various reasons. There are also those who see little opportunity for pride in their jobs due to uneasiness related to the objective conditions of their work and their subjective perceptions. There are young, ambitious workers who gradually give up their dreams and resign themselves to their jobs. May simply do not attach any importance to work and avoid talking or thinking about it. As noted previously, these workers may work hard, as hard as the hard workers. They may or may not; it is not the point. They are comparatively less attached to their jobs and do not express their attachment through the idiom of pride in their hard work –nor through any other idiom.

Yaşar (1964), a journeyman mason, is an example of someone who used to be content with and proud of his job, but is too tired now to feel either. Yaşar was one of my neighbors and had experienced debilitating poverty in his village years ago. He is still unstable financially, even in the context of İkitelli's working class residents. Yaşar lives with his family in a semi-basement apartment, two out of three rooms which are humid. Poverty had a crucial factor in the tragic death of his wife due to illness, while we were still neighbors. However, neglect of Yaşar towards his wife may have also played some role as claimed by some neighbors. As if to somehow complete their deprivation, Yaşar and his children have unusually dark skin, a fact the consequences of which I realized when I heard other chilren were making fun of his twins, who had been born in 2001. I often witnessed the twins crying and complaining to their older brother and sister about this.

Yaşar is a per diem employee, as our most construction workers working for small or mid-size contractors. He usually works 20-22 days a month earning around 65 lira per workday. He has worked for the same foreman for nearly eight years, who in turn works for the contractors, the real entrepreneurs. They build mostly apartment blocks. Yaşar is always dressed well in clean, ironed clothes, an image he emphasizes and takes pride in. He also has confidence with respect to his occupation: he is neither ashamed nor uneasy about it. When we once met in front of the apartment one evening after a tiring day of work for both of us, he asked me how life was going, and I simply answered, "just working, that's all." He replied, "You work, so do we, we aren't so different." Yaşar, indeed, captured a reality about our fellowship of class defined in

broader terms. His remark was also an expression and reconstitution of his contentment with his job. Catching me in that situation, he found a moment to relieve some of his hidden injuries – not all but those, which suffer, when one compares himself with educated white collars.

Yaşar once enjoyed and was proud of his work, but he is now tired and emphasizes this fact whenever the issue is raised: "Those working for large companies earn less than us, and they do not have idle days. But we are much more tired than them; they have opportunities to slack off. We work in a tiny building. The foreman's supervisor is right behind us. Some days I lay nearly one thousand bricks. Can you imagine that?" He tried to free himself of construction work two years ago and secured a job as a janitor with a subcontractor for six months, which he recalls as "very easy." But the subcontractor lost the renewal bid and Yaşar was deeply in debt, so he had to return to the construction site – like it or not. Yaşar neither despises nor hates his job but is weary, does not like it anymore, and leaves work at work. He gradually became an economic worker, which was not always the case. However, because of his background of rural poverty, he has often been forced to work under negative circumstances, in which it would be hard to develop positive attachments to work. After his two sons finished their military service and their wages were contributing the household budget, Yaşar began to look for alternatives. Thanks to Selim he found another janitorial job in 2014 at a nearby middle-class residential building complex.

İsmail (1979) was a subcontracted employee working as a janitor in a nearby public postal service (PTT) station. A pious man with a four-year-old daughter, İsmail inherited almost nothing when his father passed away in 2002: "we [he and his wife] are both orphans, we don't have any one taking care of or supporting us." His wife, Emine, who is older and physically larger than him, is the dominant one in their relationship, and İsmail is teased by his neighbors. He worked in shoe factories starting when he was 18 but was laid off a few years ago from a factory where he was content. He could not find tolerable work in that sector and ended up with the subcontracted employment. The couple had bought their apartment six months prior to my meeting him in October 2010 – a venture that indebted them to relatives. They could spend only a portion of their moderate income for daily needs. But thanks to

his thrift and a woman who dishes the lunch at his workplace, İsmail brings home any leftover food.

A relative working with the contractor helped him find his job in the most disastrous period of the economic crisis. While working there, he found another job in a shoe factory, but chose to stay in the janitorial position. When I asked why, he said, "I endeared myself here; I want to take my chance." Yaşar was right about the nature of janitorial work; it was easy, as İsmail also admitted. He walked to work, started at 7:00, and finished at 16:00, doing nothing arduous, he reported. The return was minimum wage, but he did not have a great chance to earn more in any other sector, anyway. There were almost no social rights, not even an annual leave. But his real worry was insecurity, which left him anxious and displeased about the job. The whole year we were neighbors, he worried continuously, mentioning how many workers were fired at one time or another, noting how he has to work precisely and diligently to not be among them. Moreover, there were rumors that his postal office was about to move to a location further away. In time, he broadened his criticism to the phenomenon of subcontracting itself, which even led him to sometimes question his loyalty to the governing AKP. But this doubt never took flight due to attacks by his wife and other loyal AKP supporters that surrounded him.

Emine once praised him: "İsmail works really hard at work, he has distinguished himself. Even some of his friends have become angry with him, telling him not to work so hard. İsmail would never do so: he makes the best of work. If you get money, you should work." He even once filled in for the place of the tea-maker and caretaker public worker, when she took her annual leave. When I asked why they chose him among the others to do that work, he replied: "Because they trust me. They can't rely on the others. Will they arrive on time? Will they do the job carefully? But they rely on me." Unfortunately, the station was closed in September 2011 and he was compelled to quit.

He again sought work in his former sector, shoe making, and after working in two different factories for short periods of time, he settled into a third job. It was hard and required standing up and performing a repetitive task for 12 hours. Two months after becoming employed, he was still trying to get used to the pace of it: "I have to push the liquid into the mold to form the sole and stick it to the upper part. You have 17 seconds to this for each shoe. It is really hard." He reported that when he comes home from work, he is usually so tired

that he needs to lie down and rest. He complained that Emine does not understand how tiring his work is, showing me a short video he shot at work so that I could see what he does in the factory.

In 2012 I thought that even though Ismail was discontent and complained, if things went well and Ismail kept the job for some years, he would have become a hard worker. But did not, probably because the job did not allow it. At the end of 2013 he was so tired of the job, complaining that the boss sped up the pace of production on top of the other adversities. He was depressed and at the time sounded like a despiser. When he found an opening in the factory of a large shoe brand, he changed his job. Although this new job gave him the opportunity to gain new skills, it was just another minimum wage work. He quit when he fought with his foreman, who scolded him for not producing enough.

Luckily, Ismail did not have to search much more. A former foreman called him to work together in a factory offering 30 percent more than minimum wage. While working in this latest workplace, he summed up his position about his job: "God damn the shoe business! It is a shitty one." Even in this last, somewhat better factory job, he was not particularly content, expressing regret for not continuing with janitor work. That was his chance to be rid of a sector he does not and cannot like anymore. The feeling seems reasonable given his working conditions.

Ferdi (1979), the father of two children, was an outcast when he was young and is still not "tame" enough to attach meaning to his job.[181] He knows İsmail from the neighborhood and from a factory where they worked together. When I mentioned İsmail, he said that İsmail used to call him "abi" [older brother], because Ferdi was tough and enjoyed life outside of the routine, while İsmail represented the opposite.[182]

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181 He was also not "tame" in terms of marital fidelity. His marriage almost collapsed in 2010 because of an affair with a girl from the gum factory. After he ended that affair, the marriage crisis partially resolved with the involvement of both families. He bought a new, better apartment with his compensation and started to play the role of a family man, a challenging task for him.

182 Another thing Ferdi recalls related to a class conflict in another shoe factory where İsmail worked with Ferdi's older brother. Ferdi remarked that İsmail did not join in the struggle supported by leading workers including Ferdi's brother.

Ferdi is a friend of Nafız and my protagonist, Mehmet because they were coworkers in the gum factory. Nafız had an impact on Ferdi and served as an example of an industrious man. When talking about his job, Ferdi's tone is complaint, and he does not suggest any identification with or intrinsic meaning in work. The only thing he talks is its social side: his buddies and the women he flirts with. Having experienced migration as a teenager, Ferdi was one of those working-class "vagabonds," using alcohol and simple drugs, hanging around and running with local youth gangs. As with many working-class youth of Turkey, he reports that he "came to his senses" during his compulsory military service.[183]

Thanks to a foreman in the gum factory who tolerated his antics and gave him several chances to acclimate to factory discipline, he worked there for ten years and became the breadwinner of his family. There he became close friends with Nafız and Mehmet, and thanks to both his relations with them, and his pragmatism, he became the shop steward after the position was offered to but refused by Nafız. Since 2007, when I first met with this group, Ferdi has never talked about the work itself or implied that it has any intrinsic meaning for him. He cares about the social relations but not for the work itself. After he had to leave the gum factory in the middle of the 2010 economic crisis, he had a hard time finding steady, decent work where he would receive his wages on time. Until in April 2011 he found a nine hour a day, unionized job in a factory of UNO, a well-known brand of bread, he worked in seven different workplaces but was unable to get his full wages from almost any of them. Ferdi is content with his new work, which Nafız had helped him to secure, and makes light of the hard times they searched for a decent job.

As a vocational school graduate working in an electronics factory run by Koç Holding, Doğan is a young craftsman in the making as mentioned above.

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183   In Turkey, military service is an important passage to adulthood, especially for working-class men. "Vagabonds" like Ferdi become disciplined during their service whether they like it or not. High school dropouts who frequently change jobs and just hang out when unemployed in between might be disregarded by their fathers, but not once they return back from military service. For a working class kid it is difficult to find a steady job – one, which offers a future – without having completed the service. The military service prepares the young male for wage work in a way similar to the effect of lads' culture described by Willis reveals. See Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*.

There are a few young men and women who even graduate from a university, but a significant proportion of youth do not graduate even from a vocational high school and work as unskilled laborers. The jobs offered by the labor market are not much promising, and most in this category of youth that I encountered do not identify with or care about their jobs. This is unsurprising given the universal fact mentioned above that youth are proportionally less work centered.

Erkan (1984) began working in one of the abundant garment workshops in the neighborhood when he was 13 years old, after he had finished his five compulsory years of education. His father is the brother-in-law of Fethi, whose story is told above. His teenage years were hard times for Erkan and his family. When I asked him to tell me about his life in our first serious talk, he started off with "I began working after I finished the primary school." His two older brothers have minor disabilities, and all of the siblings including a sister, are reticent and unassertive, except for Cengiz-the-young, I mentioned above. Until Erkan left for his military service, he worked in socks workshops within the neighborhood with his friends from the neighborhood: "When there is a certain workplace or sector within a neighborhood, all the kids of that place work there, and all the workers would know each other." After returning, he found a job in the same sector in a factory far from the neighborhood, kept working there from 2006 until the factory closed in June 2009.

Left jobless in the middle of an economic crisis, he could not find a job providing minimum wage and social security. During that period, he even visited his village for a time to rest and relax his mind. He finally found a job as a nightshift janitor in the nearby office building of a large bank, İş Bankası. When I asked him if he liked his job, he laughed. He didn't, but added that it is easy, requiring little effort and no stress. He preferred working at night when there are few people around, and he reported that the "atmosphere is very different" than his former jobs. He meant that the social relations were formal and not as close or friendly as what he experienced in previous jobs. Once we were having dinner in Fethi's home – two families together – and Erkan began tidying himself up for his drive to work. Fethi's younger son, an assertive and aggressive adolescent, teased him: "Erkan will go to work, have a dustpan in his hand and clean up." Erkan did not answer. It was a predictable scene, but I

did not expect it and then better understood why Erkan did not talk about his work.

In 2013 the bank moved far away so Erkan quit. With the help of a relative working in the marketing department, he got into a factory producing exhaust pipes. He did not like the though and dirty job, which offered only minimum wage and dust. Almost all fringe benefits were cut. The opportunity to make some extra money over time work was very rare. He was looking forward to hearing from his relative in marketing, who had said that he might find Erkan a position in that department, but Erkan was losing hope. Through another relative he was trying to find a custodial job at the Metrobus stops, which sounded like a more decent job.

At least four other young men I met possess a similar subjectivity to Erkan. I will present two of them. Tuncay (1991) is Yaşar's third child, older than the twins. He dropped out of secondary school and has been working in garment workshops since he was 16. At the end of 2009, he began working in a jeans factory nearby where his older sister and brother have been working since childhood. Their employer was supposedly satisfied and had a paternalistic relationship with the two. When Tuncay's brother was to leave for his military service, the boss asked for Tuncay to replace him. Tuncay began running an expensive, special machine that had been run by his brother. Tuncay liked neither the garment sector nor the particular factory: "Nowadays everybody is trying to run away from textile sector, even to be an auto mechanic or apprentice in a barbershop. Textiles offer nothing, no future." He exaggerates the flight from textile sector to legitimize his desire to change sectors, but it is an observable tendency in İkitelli and Istanbul, to an extent. It is common discourse one hears often among the working class, and a popular complaint among the employers.

Tuncay's latest workplace – at that time – was worse than his former, relatively easy-going workshops. It was more disciplined, there were cameras everywhere, the boss was harsh, and it was dusty. Most people do not work there long. He had no social security and worked for long, flexible hours, but these two were the only way he knew, so they were not among the problems he raised. The only positive feature was that he received his money on time. Tuncay would leave the workshop if it was his decision, but his father was insistent. Moreover, he has not given up on the idea of working together side-by-side

with his brother, who was a favorite of the boss. This is the main reason Tuncay did not despise his work. He was simply detached because of reasonable factors and his young age. Tuncay's older brother Serdar, with whom I could not get closer because he was in the military at the time I was living in İkitelli, is probably a hard worker judging from what I heard about him. Tuncay may yet chose to follow in Serdar's path.

By working class standards, Fatih (1986) is a spoiled child. His father, Fethi, is a good man, a liberal and supportive father. Fatih received a car, for instance, when he was just 18, and "he likes to travel" as Erkan remarks in a way that points to their differences. Fatih is more prosperous, outgoing, and confident than Erkan. He has a group of childhood friends living in the same street comprising the most visible, male youth group of their street. But Fatih would randomly say things like "except for a few, I don't trust them. All they actually care about are their own interests." He is known for a hot-tempered nature, and his nickname is "dead," because he is so skinny and pale. I mentioned his obsessiveness with the Ponzi scheme quest.net, which brought out his desire to become an entrepreneur, an employer, and while collar: "I am a boss [*patron adamım*], I have six people who work under me," was his vivid characterization of his situation at the time.

As a primary school dropout, Fatih worked in textile factories since he was 16. Since 2006, after finishing his military service, he began working in a large factory where hehas worked since except for being temporarily laid off for nine months due to the global financial crisis. He does not like his job. That was his very motivation for trying so hard to become something else through the Ponzi scheme. He does not like his job because it is boring, and there are too many people above him bossing him around. The factory is disorganized and favoritism is common. Workers did not receive any wage increase last two years, fringe benefits were recently reduced, and payments for overtime were made late: "nobody gets what he deserves." Even though they seem different, he is the son of his father and was critical of his boss. However, he thinks the actual job is not that hard compared to other workplaces, and this is his reason for not despising his work.

Mustafa (1966) is a storyteller, a man of curiosity, a lay philosopher even. There may be many reasons for this, but the fact he had spent the last 16 years as a security guard at İSTOÇ is among them. He is even more curious than

Mehmet, and since he learned how to use internet, is more literate. As the father of three boys, one of whom is spastic, Mustafa tends to spend his spare time at the coffeehouse, playing cards, a fact that Hanife, his industrious wife, complains makes her sad and tired.

At an evening in their apartment together with Muzaffer, a close relative and also a security guard, I asked why some people chose to stay in their village while others migrate to the city. Hanife gave the examples of her brother and some other relatives in a way that revealed her appreciation for her husband's labor:

> Stranger's business [*el işi*]! That's the reason. Those who stay at the village, they don't want to work at a stranger's business. They want to handle their own business in the village. They prefer to work one day and rest the other. My brother for example, he wasted himself. He had the potential. These [indicating Mustafa and Muzaffer] came and have been working at the stranger's business for 20 years. Not easy. But they keep working. Others prefer not to have someone bossing them around.

Mustafa then took the floor: "No one can do whatever he wants; everyone is dependent anyway. Even if you climb to the top, it is the same. Sabancı[184] was also like that; even he couldn't do whatever he wanted." As someone having been in that "not easy" position for many years, Mustafa gave a clue on how to handle it. In another conversation, Mustafa described wage labor as follows:

> If you work in the private sector, you have to know that you are not irreplaceable. You have to comply with what they say. The work hours, other things, this and that… They determine everything, no matter if it's appropriate for you or not. You know, they call it flexible now.

Since Mustafa was a senior guard, and after years of work at less desirable locations, he was working at a relatively peaceful place, the administrative building of İSTOÇ. One week his shifts are from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., the other from 4

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184   Sakıp Sabancı, one of the richest and most well-known or Turkish businessmen, passed away in 2004.

to 11 p.m. As usually, he has an elaborate answer to the question of what he thinks about being a security guard:

> Policemen and security guards usually have psychological problems; their minds are weird. Do I produce anything? Do my hands hold anything? No. When a man thinks about this, he feels really weird. But then I thought a lot and said to myself: if I were not doing this, the bums of Mahmutbey [the closest neighborhood] would tear İSTOÇ[185] down. This means that I serve a purpose. This means that those businesses can run because of me.

The self-affirmation is important as a discourse to be used when needed, but is as melancholic as his self-comparison with Sabancı. This self-affirmation is not something he considers daily. Mustafa neither talks about his work, nor expresses any satisfaction with it. It is something he endures and leaves behind when his shift is over.

The security business is a troubled one. The job itself is relatively easy and less stressful than other blue-collar jobs. On the other hand, as Muzaffer, Mustafa's cousin, puts it "you don't do anything in the security business, it is extremely meaningless." In the evening of a religious holiday, Mustafa and Hanife had visitors: a close friend, Osman, who is also a distant relative, together with his three daughters. Osman was an experienced garment worker proudly explaining why he had refused a promotion to foreman: "It is a terrible thing to caught in between the management and worker; you have to lie all the time." During our cheerful holiday conservation, the dialogue began with Osman teasing his old friend:

> — Osman: Mustafa, I wonder about something. When we die, we are all gonna go to the other side[186] and they will ask you: What work did you do in your life? What good did your work accomplish? How were you beneficial? What purpose did you serve? I wonder a lot what you're gonna answer. [Laughs]
> — Mustafa: Let me explain what purpose I served.

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185   The name of the trade center, where he works.

186   A literal translation of a saying in Turkish, meaning afterlife.

— Osman: No, no, no. Not now. I know you can deceive me, you
surely will. We all know how sly you are. But you can't deceive
them. There we will understand if you did any real work or not.

Yaşar, İsmail, Ferdi, Erkan, Fatih, Tuncay, Mustafa, and many others share a
common subjectivity about their jobs. If in the class-based world of capitalism
work is a struggle for resources and dignity, it is also for meaning and satisfac-
tion. These men survive in this struggle, they do nothing more and nothing
less. They are detached from their jobs for different reasons, mostly due to a
little capitalism offers them. Their dissatisfaction is modest, but they cannot
or do not identify themselves with their jobs, not even moderately. They do
not attach intrinsic meaning to work, because they are emotionally distanced
from their jobs.

There are at least three different trajectories for becoming a detached sur-
vivor. First, those like Yaşar probably used to be hard workers, but lost their
relative attachment to and meaning from work as they grew older and more
tired. Given the working conditions, such a trajectory is understandable.
Those like İsmail, Erkan, Tuncay, and Mustafa might like to be hard workers,
and someday may. But their actual jobs are too irritating for developing a
higher level of attachment or for ascribing deeper meanings. And finally, those
like Ferdi and Fatih are too untamed or too spoiled or simply uninterested in
attaching meaning to wage work. They sacrifice just the minimum to the God
of wage work to survive both in terms of bread and meaning.

This position seems to be the most common, since the two positions de-
scribed above require conditions that are rare and extenuating for workers of
İkitelli. On the other hand, the final position, the despiser, is not a sustainable,
durable subjectivity. Those who despise their jobs either change them for rel-
atively better ones, or they suppress their intense, negative feelings transform-
ing them into apathy, instead. Although it is hard to make a generalization,
there may be a tendency for detached survivors to keep their distance from
struggles to improve working conditions. This reluctance is due to their weak
attachment to the job and to the workplace. They make no or a minimum in-
vestment in their jobs and forget about them once their shift ends. To change
the working conditions of a workplace a through collective action is a me-
dium-term project, requiring some degree of attachment.

> The men ordinarily do not talk about their jobs or ask one another about them…[187] Job assessments typically consist of nothing more than a noncommittal shrug and "It's OK" or "It's a job…"[188] The job is not a stepping-stone to something better. It is a dead end delivering little promising no more, the job is "no big thing."[189]

These are Liebow's observations of black, working-class men in the United States in the 1960s, who due to racism were stuck in non-unionized, more precarious, lower-paying jobs compared to white counterparts. It is no exaggeration to assume that these features of precariousness and low-paying are much more generalized for larger sections of the global working class thanks to the assault of neoliberalism. It is no surprise to see that his observations apply to a group that is so different in terms of time and space.

3.2.4   *The Despiser*

In Turkey as elsewhere, a worker is by definition a potential despiser. This is an integral part of the working-class condition as many scholars of labor note. With the exception of the upper echelons of professionals and management, almost all workers are at risk of various assaults, because the capitalist labor market and supportive super-structural formations elaborately render workers weaker than their employers. Even extreme hard workers – work-lovers could name something about their jobs that they despise. However, the despiser I am talking about has a greater burden, a greater dislike, which comes to define the meaning he attaches to his job.

I prefer despise to words like hate or detest, because – while it has the meaning of hate – it also implies contempt, looking down. The despiser's contempt is for his job, but it may also involve himself. Among my group of despisers, women seem to despise their jobs, not themselves. Male despisers, on the other hand, extend their negative feeling related to their selves. They blame themselves. Since "the moral obligation to be work centered is imposed more

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187   Liebow, *Tally's Corner, a Study of Negro Streercorner*, 56.

188   Ibid., 59.

189   Ibid., 63.

upon men than women," this is unsurprising.[190] As I mentioned, Sennett and Cobb revealed that "a secret self-accusation" is "implanted" in those, who did not "come off as well," because under capitalism social differences appear "as questions of character, of moral resolve, will, and competence."[191] Losing conviction in one's own dignity seems to be a major legitimizing mechanism of capitalism. Male despisers deal with something more than implanted, secret self-accusation. Their self-despisal is quite conspicuous.

The despisers constitute a small group, because it is a position one cannot endure for long. In short, despisers are those for whom the ability to leave the work at work, in other words to detach oneself from one's job, is a luxury. How do people end up with this subjectivity? For what reasons? Through which trajectory? What compels a person to do a job she fervently dislikes and despises? The answer is of course necessity, but that necessity needs scrunity: what is the experience and perception of a job as a necessity? Given the cases, perhaps the real question is this: faced with necessity, why can a person not moderate his feelings about the job he is doing? Or to put it in another way, why can a person not resist returning to and fueling his negative feelings about his job? These are the questions I address in the presentation of despisers.

My protagonist Mehmet was a despiser while working for three months as a janitor in the newly opened, nearby mall. During this period, beginning from December 2009, he often stopped by my apartment, which is on the halfway from mall to his place, after finishing up the work just before midnight. We would drink beer and talk about how he hated the job. As I explained, he had quit a factory job in August 2008 and was receiving an unemployment wage from state while working informal, insecure jobs. But he was dismissed from three different positions due to the economic crisis. He sold their apartment in İkitelli and with additional credit, bought a plot in Çerkezköy and built an apartment building to sell for a profit. He planned to begin a career as a self-employed real estate agent in Çerkezköy, but the crisis ruined his plans. Both the selling price of his property and the general value of real estate opportunities in Çerkezköy shrank. At this juncture Mehmet was obliged to work at the mall, a job he despised.

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190   Noon and Blyton, *The Realities of Work*, 62.
191   Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, 256.

I have been friends with Mehmet since 2006, and have never seen him more depressed than in these three months. He complained about disgusting things he had to handle while cleaning the restrooms, about how he tired from standing and running around the whole day long, and about supervisors' harsh treatment of workers. He pointed out that all of these were just to earn minimum wage. I never saw him talk so much about his job before. While claimed that "the conditions are so bad, if there were no crisis no one would work there," Mehmet knew, of course, that there is always a supply of people who would have to accept that kind of job. He had prepared himself to be free of wage work and become an entrepreneur. This was unimaginable downward mobility for him. He not only despised his job, but himself, experiencing a crisis of self-confidence.

He even became critical of politics and politicians, including the then prime minister, whom he admired: "Tayyip said in 2002 'We will not make you depend on simit and tea!' But what happened? That's what we're living now." The fact that Mehmet could withstand his negative stance toward his job for three months was explained firstly by his enduring, albeit injured self-esteem. He believed this job was not what he deserved, and that was why he despised it, together with himself. The other factor was his persistent hope that he would soon be free of wage-labor. The stark contrast between his lively hopes of becoming an entrepreneur and his actual job provoked his contempt. Indeed, he freed himself of it after finally selling his newly constructed apartment in Çerkezköy. In his case despising was a short-term condition, which emerged and endured due to the hope of soon finding a better job. After working as a real estate agent for nearly two years with two different partners, Mehmet returned to wage work. He worked in a textile workshop, which was tough. Then in May 2013 he found a better, more relaxed janitorial job, decent compared to the one at the mall. He began working in the sales office of a residential building complex under construction close to his new apartment. (The working-class neighborhood has been surrounded by middle-class residential complexes and malls.) There he became a detached survivor just as he was when we first met while he was working in the gum factory.

The reason I mention Mehmet in this category is to point to this particular moment in his life as a situation experienced by many people for short-term

periods, especially during economic crises. Many workers I knew in the neighborhood had lived through this kind of experiences embracin the despiser subjectivity during crises. Though lacking a particular skill, they had self-esteem and enjoyed a certain social capital; therefore, they were hopeful of finding better jobs whenever the crisis ended. Indeed, some found them, others not. But importantly, a despising attitude is adopted by workers, when working in jobs that are worse than what they think they deserve and are able to find in normal circumstances.

Selim's (1976) despisal for his job was lasting. Selim used to work as a self-employed, semi-skilled construction craftsman making ceiling ornaments and mouldings, but after the 1999 earthquake in Istanbul his business slowed, and he eventually had to give it up. Since 2002, he has been working as a porter in a textile workshop run by his cousin. He still performed his craft as a second job whenever he found the rare customer, but what he did six days a week was to unload sacks of yarn coming to the workshop and load other trucks with the rolls of fabric that had been produced. Selim was a neighbor in my second apartment building, a social man who often gathers neighbors in his apartment in the evening. Four families in the building enjoyed a close knit network, into which I was kindly invited.

Almost every time I asked Selim about his job, he answered with several of the following negative expressions: it was tiring, he did not like it at all, he carried x tons of product a day, three of his disks had become herniated, and he would quit the job as soon as his retirement premiums were paid up. He often began to complain about his job on his own without anyone asking about it. Selim has night-blindness, which makes him eligible for early retirement, so he was hoping to retire in 2012 and was counting the days. Because his employer was a relative, he has no critical words for him. He revealed several situations where he chose not participate with the other workers when they confront the employer to complain about mismanagement. Selim's despisal for his job was mainly due to the fact of his downward mobility given he was oce a self-employed man. He cannot help comparing his current situation with those "good old days." The fact that he was in his final year before retirement also provoked him to express his negative feelings more energetically. He had endured the job for nine years because he believed that he could not find a better one, and being employed by a cousin was preferable to being employed

by a stranger. His mild handicap also made him anxious about risking that job.

At the end of 2011 his firm unexpectedly came close to bankruptcy and began laying people off. Selim's turn came in February. However, his retirement premiums were already above the necessary level and he received his first retirement payment that spring. It was moderate because his employer had been paying the minimum premiums. For eight months, Selim tried to make some extra money by hawking socks and toys along the nearby main street, but the income was meager and irregular. Then he began looking for wage work again, working as a construction laborer, and finally found a sub-contracted janitorial job in a nearby residential building complex thanks to his brother, who was a construction worker there. It pays minimum wage with no fringe benefits and the job security is minimal, but Selim is content because the work is not tiring. He is willingly employed informally so that he can continue getting his pension. He is actually so content that he recruited Yaşar to start working at the same place, and so the two old buddies have become coworkers. Selim finally rose to become a detached survivor.

When I met him, the vicissitudes of life had turned Muzaffer (1971) into a man with such severe crisis of self-esteem that he had developed a new annoyance – a backache – which was perhaps psychosomatic. Muzaffer is the cousin of Mustafa, the lay philosopher security guard mentioned above. As a high school graduate, Muzaffer married late, at the age of 26, and migrated to Istanbul with his wife in 1997. Those fluctuations in Muzaffer's life mainly concerns his unpleasant experiences with the neoliberal labor market, starting with his being laid off from a well-paying, unionized factory job during the economic crisis of 2001. He narrates the experience in a lively manner: how he searched hard for a job but could not find one for months. One day he and a neighbor searched the whole of the area surrounding İkitelli, which is full of factories and workshops: "No matter what kind of a job it was, we could not find even one firm looking for a worker. Can you imagine that? I saw this country in that condition." After searching for four months, he found a job in a dyeing plant: "I was shocked when I began working there for 87 million compared to the 300 million I used to earn in the factory. Even that amount we could not get in a regular way."

After two years, he became allergic to a substance used in the plant and stopped working for treatment. In 2004, he began working as a cargo carrier for a firm in İSTOÇ, another low-paying job. But the worst was yet to come. In 2007, while walking home one night after his shift, he was stabbed and robbed. He recovered from the stab wound, but not from the psychological one: "I was intimidated; I became very anxious. I could not work for some time even after I recovered. And I am still not very well." Since 2008, he has been employed as a security guard by a subcontractor in one of the nearby industry estates. He does not like the job whatsoever, for tangible reasons: late working hours and long shifts, handling people who yell at them while following the procedures they have to, low wages (less than one and a half times the minimum wage), and lack of job security. "It's not a job worth doing. If I can find another one, I will quit immediately." The lack of job security is the aspect he underscored most – which relates to the subcontracted nature of the contract – but he is also troubled about the job itself: "You don't do anything in the security business, it is extremely meaningless."

Muzaffer is a more caring father and husband compared to his cousin Mustafa. He takes refuge in being a family man, while his cousin takes refuge in the coffeehouse. While Mustafa jokes about his job and can detach himself from it, the self-accusation Mustafa bears is heavy and difficult to handle. He became taciturn and timid, blaming himself for his unpleasant experiences and downward trajectory within the labor market. He does not see opportunity externally nor within himself to find better work than security guard, a job he despises. His relative downward mobility, psychological injuries, and belief that he is stuck with that job make him feel enchained and depressed. Later, he twice changed workplaces and became less exasperated, but his general self-despisal for his job and himself are intact.

I met Rıza (1965) and his wife Fadime one evening gathered in Mehmet and Sema's apartment together with my wife for dinner in 2010. Rıza was Sema's coworker in the furniture shop, a carrier and assembler of furniture. He had also built a relationship with Mehmet when Mehmet had worked there for a couple months. Since Sema had good relations with her coworkers, and their apartments were close, the two couples began meeting together on occasion. Rıza confused me. He had a more subaltern, downtrodden habitus compared to most people I have discussed so far. He was from Yozgat, a rather

poorer city, which partially explaned his demeanor, at first. On the other hand, Rıza was extremely critical of his employers and his working conditions, and was outspoken. While talking about his boss and expressing his anger, he was determined and self-confident – filled with anger. He gave details about how one of his bosses, in particular, looked down on the workers. At some point he became irritated with his own speech, perhaps for being too outspoken, and unexpectedly decided to end the night and leave.

Later I learned from Sema and Mehmet that Rıza was an extraordinarily obedient and industrious worker in the shop, where he had been working for eight years when we first met. Sema told me that Rıza was doing the job of three men, that he never sat down, and that he ate little compared to others. Sema later reported that Rıza was been obedient not only to the boss and his supervisors, but even to bullying coworkers. The reason for Rıza's extraordinary obedience seemed to be his past poverty, which he had only recently left behind. He had lost his first wife due to an illness, that had left her bedridden for a long time. On top of that, he himself had been in a major work accident ten years before, which had left him bedridden. His two boys had suffered in the familial economic crisis that followed. Sema explained that until recently his family had received aid from an NGO and a local bread bakery. His second wife, Fadime related some other evening when we were all together that he had been oppressed and abused by his employers, embarrassing Rıza. According to Sema, Rıza was extremely afraid of being laid off, as his self-esteem had been injured or maybe it had been so since adolescence, due to the conditions in which he grew up. In later conversations, from what I heard from him, I thought that Rıza would be a hard worker if only his working conditions were more decent. However, because management and coworkers abused his fear and lack of self-esteem, his work life had turned into a nightmare, leading him to despise his job.

Another sub-group I encountered who consistently expressed that they despise their jobs consisted of three women. Adil's wife, Yeter, Yeter's sister, Ayla, and Yaşar's daughter, Zeynep are not identify themselves with their jobs and they clearly express their dislike whenever they find the chance. They hope and expect to stop working soon. Since 2007, Yeter (1970) has been cleaning for two or three days a week at the firm where Adil works; Adil apparently wanted her to be doing that work. She had worked in factories for two years

after she first moved to her sister's place in Istanbul in 1991, but once her boys were born, she could not work outside the home. However, she was knittin at home for the dowries of girls in the neighborhood and, according to the praise of her two sisters, she was the most productive among them. "I was making more money than I am now," she recalls. She was specific, reminding me that she had sold bracelets earned through knitting to have a new house built in the village. But the knitting business shrank as fashions changed.

Yeter always answers my questions about her life with narratives of suffering [*çile*]: "We had sufferings to endure, as is written in our fate" [*çekilecek çilemiz varmış*] is how she often begins her stories. Besides "ordinary" hardships experienced as a working-class woman, she particularly refers to her handicapped son, Eray: to how she toiled to raise and deal with him. Indeed, the toll is visible on her body, because she looks almost ten years older than Adil. Yeter places her recent work experience within this narrative context. As an already too tired woman, she does not like her tiresome job and expresses despisal whenever possible. Specifically, she complains about the physical effort of cleaning three floors of office space and about other workers, who watch her performance like "cameras" to snitch to the boss. The boss' housemaid, who often showed up at the firm, was evil according to Yeter, and made her uncomfortable. "It's not like cleaning your own home, it is stranger's business, you know…" Yeter's talkativeness about her job is a strategy – a weapon of the weak – as she was trying to wear down her husband's insistence having her work. But so far she was not successful.

Ayla (1973) is unmarried and stays with her older sister, Yeter, and Adil. She does not wear a headscarf, which is rare among Sunni women of her age, though more common among urban-born youth. Ayla came to İkitelli in 1997 and has lived with her two sisters and worked since then. Her second factory job was in Dandy, the gum factory, where Mehmet, Nafız and others once worked. She worked there for seven years, and from the way she and Yeter portrayed those years, she seemed to be a hard worker back then. She recalls that time with nostalgia: the factory was decent, she worked hard, made money, and had great friends. "If you are gonna drown, you should do so in a big river" was her way to sum it up. Since wage work is like drowning, you had better do it in large factories, where you might work harder, but the conditions are better. She recalled precisely that for four years and two months she

worked overtime continuously - around 12 hours a day. She made and also spent a lot of money. However, due to personal reasons, she quit the job and went back to the village for a year to "get away from it all."

When she returned in 2008, she found a job in the food industry, in a small workshop employing 20 people. Ayla was working there when we met, and she understandably despised her job. Her boss was a "mean and filthy" man, who oppressed the workers, looked down on, and systematically insulted them. He reprimanded even minor mistakes and a common punishment was forced overtime without pay. The tyranny he held over the shop floor brought forth an individualistic shop floor culture among the workers, who did not trust or help one another; on the contrary, according to Ayla they envied and informed on one another. Even after three years, she felt that she had no friend there. The only upside was on-time payment of wages, a luxury for those working in the workshops especially during the crisis. When we met in that period and I would ask how work was going, she always answered in the same way: "As you know, I'm leading a dog's life" (*n'olsun işte sürünüyoruz*).

Ayla recently took credit from a bank and bought an apartment as an investment. She had the mortgage payments and this was the main reason she kept working and could not afford unemployment for even a couple of months. She was also skeptical that she could find a better job, but looked forward to quitting once the credit was repaid. Indeed, in 2013 Ayla finished paying her debt, quit the job, and returned to the village. She rented her apartment, which provides a sufficient amount to live on in the village. In addition to the horrible conditions she endured, the contrast with her former workplace incited strong negative feelings in Ayla.

Looking at Yeter, we can assume that Yaşar's first born Zeynep (1989) will recall life before marriage as a period of suffering. I mentioned that the family had experienced severe poverty and was only recently recovering. As Beyhan, Selim's wife, once said, some people still refered to them as "gariban," a term close to wretch. The siblings lost their mother due to illness at the beginning of 2010, when we were neighbors. The poverty from which they came played a decisive role in this tragedy.

Zeynep began working "less than one week" after the family settled in İkitelli in 1991, when she was only twelve. She was so short at the time – probably due to malnutrition – that they had difficulties finding a job for her. Employers

did not believe that she could really work. Since then, she has been working in the same workshop where her two younger brothers would also work at much later date. Once she said, "I was working so that they [her brothers] could study, but they were busy running away from school." Besides the wage work she was forced to perform at an early age, she had a second shift at home. At a momentary encounter in their kitchen, she complained to me that after the death of her mother, all the chores except preparing breakfast were on her shoulders, including caring for her ten- year-old twin brothers. Just as with her deceased mother, as the only female in the family, her share of the burden of the family's poverty was greater than that of the male members.

Zeynep liked neither her job nor her boss, and her feelings were deep-seated.[192] I did not have long conversations with her. Because she was shy around me and I did not want to make her uncomfortable, I would talk with her only in collective meetings at one of the apartments. Convinced that they were the tip of an iceberg, I witnessed only a glimpse of her feelings. Whenever the issue of work was discussed, Zeynep was almost always first in the community to complain. Indeed, she was the only one in the family to openly criticize her boss. Tuncay, her brother, would not make such criticisms in the presence of his father, who was the firm defender of the boss because of paternalistic gestures he had made with respect to the family. Zeynep complained not only about the long hours, the pace of the work, the discipline, the dust, and the fact that only two years of her social security premiums had been paid for nine years of service. She despised her boss, who exploited the favors he did for the family reminding Zeynep of them to demand her obedience and hard work in return. She did not want to endure that kind of humiliating trap, but she would have to until she got married and escaped the domination of her father. She married with a *hemseri* [countryman] she met at her workplace in June 2012, but she kept working through May, which was – in my subjective view – yet another sign of Yaşar's cruelty to his daughter, though I never asked

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192   Discounting their peculiarity, Ayla and Zeynep's feelings are unsurprising if we recall Coşkun's finding that half of women working in workshops "hate" their jobs. Among the women working in factories, the proportion was one-forth. See Coşkun, *Sınıf, Kültür Ve Bilinç*, 224.

her opinion. I was afraid of humiliating her. Later I heard from Beyhan that she had given birth to a girl and that she rarely comes to visit her father.

Mehmet, Selim, Muzaffer, Rıza, Yeter, Ayla, and Zeynep revealed a tough and daunting subjectivity at some period of their lives. They all deliberately disliked and even despised their jobs and they wanted to get rid of them. They could neither change their strong negative feelings, nor adapt themselves to the situation. It seems that this subjectivity, this strong feeling mostly originates from an experience of relative downward mobility in terms of the qualities of the job. That was the case for Selim (from semi-skilled self-employment to unskilled wage-work), Muzaffer (from unionized, prestigious factory job to insecure and less rewarding ones), and Mehmet and Ayla (both from relatively good factory jobs to worse ones).

Rıza, Yeter, and Zeynep did not end up this subjectivity through a relative downward mobility. The paths of the formation of their despising subjectivities were rather different. Rıza was enduring extremely oppressive conditions due to his extreme acquiescence shaped mostly by his poverty-stricken background, full with misfortunes. Their patriarchs made Yeter and Zeynep to do jobs they dislike. Simply being constrained this way aggrandize Yeter's and Zeynep's negative feelings, not to mention the objective poor conditions they faced at work.

A perceived opportunity to get rid of the job in the near future is another factor, which tends to make people feel and express their dislike in a stronger way. For men, this subjectivity has a strong potential to erode the dignity and the self-confidence. Women, on the other hand, did not despise themselves but only their jobs. One factor behind this difference might be their awareness of the patriarchal context they were entrapped as the main reason for their being stuck with these jobs. Another factor is that they did not feel the moral obligation of being a competent "bread winner." Since one cannot endure this position for long, by using different strategies most of those mentioned above managed to leave behind these jobs they despised.

§ 3.3 Conclusion

I began this chapter by critiquing bot the pessimistic and optimistic accounts of the meanings that manual workers attach to their work. I examined how the theoretical assumptions of these accounts excessively biased their data and their interpretation. I indicated that there is a tendency to generalize first the sample and then the universe because of this over-determination by theory – whether pessimist or optimist. Generalizations such as the "alienated worker destined to be meaninglessness," the "hard-working meaning seeker," and the "attached worker destined to be docile" have a basis among the working class, but it is neither needed nor right to generalize. In reality there is room for all of these types and for others.

To present what I observed in the field, I proposed a framework comprised of four subjectivities among which people move: craftsman, hard-worker, detached survivor, and despiser. Theoretically, it is possible to argue that the trio of hard worker, detached survivor, and despiser could also be subcategories of the craftsman, since among craftsmen these three subjectivities are probably present. However, my sample of craftsmen was moderate and they were all hard worker, an overlapping commonly noted by many who scholars observe that craftsmen have tendency to have pride in and feel satisfied with their jobs, two features with which I define hard worker.[193]

I indicated that the first two subjectivities, namely craftsman and hard worker derive positive meanings – including intrinsic ones – from their jobs, but optimistic accounts in the literature are overly focused on these meanings to the exclusion of all else. On the other hand, the latter two, the detached survivor and the despiser, show few signs of obtaining positive intrinsic meaning from work, as pessimist accounts tend to generalize. Furthermore, contrary to the general assumption, I reveal that positive feelings about work do not necessarily generate passivity as many workers I came across in the course of my fieldwork prove.

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193   For analytical precision, one should read craftsman as the hard working craftsman, hard worker as the un/semi-skilled hard worker, detached survivor as the un/semi-skilled detached survivor, and despiser as the un/semi-skilled despiser.

I emphasized the importance of shifts in the meaning of work and shifts in concomitant worker subjectivities. There are common flows among them. Whereas some hard workers who had the chance to learn a craft along the way moved toward the craftsman subjectivity (Salih, Sinan, İbrahim, Doğan, Cihan, and possibly Nafız), others move in the opposite direction. Those who became tired, older, or were fired and later had to do inferior jobs as a result, became detached (Yaşar, İsmail, Ayla, Muzaffer and Cengiz just before retiring). Some continued along the trajectory to become despisers (Ayla and Muzaffer) when compelled to do menial jobs. As longstanding detached survivors, Mehmet and Zeynep paralleled them on the path from detached to despiser.

Adil, Fethi, and Sema are among those moving in the opposite direction. Adil and Fethi probably used to be detached but became hard workers, just as I witnessed Sema do, through seniority and subjective attachment to their jobs. Another major flow was from despiser to anywhere else. Ayla and Zeynep pulled themselves out of wage work, Ayla by returning to her village and Zeynep through marriage. Mehmet did the same by becoming an entrepreneur. Selim found a better job and embraced the subjectivity of detached survivor. Muzaffer also found relatively better work and might be on same course. On the other hand, there are those who stick with the same subjectivity, as the stability of Mustafa, Ferdi, Erkan, Fatih and Tuncay at the group of detached survivor illustrates. Mustafa is a longstanding detached survivor due to the nature of his job in the security business; the others are young enough to move elsewhere, and Tuncay and Erkan have clear potential to become hard workers.

While this chapter is about meanings workers attach to their jobs, it also concerns the meanings attached to manual labor by society in general and by social scientists, in particular. For a more equitable society, the gap between the symbolic meanings attached to different jobs and skills must be narrowed. To build a juster society and to make it sustain itself, we need not only a social but also a cultural transformation, as clearly demonstrated by reformers. Recognizing and paying tribute to the contributions of the laboring classes is crucial to cultural values, such as democracy and solidarity, as most clearly enunciated by Thompson. However, this has always been a difficult and paradoxical effort: the class system itself has been rigorously at work to disable the laboring

classes, preventing them from actualizing their potential or improving their contribution to society. Is this not the main reason that the reformers and revolutionaries criticize the class system in the first place? The task is to search for, find, and reveal real (not only potential) contributions of the laboring classes, which are invariably partial, fragile, and nascent, precisely because the class system impaired them.

Similarly, to weaken the capitalist hegemony it is essential to undermine the hierarchy between different jobs – such as manual and intellectual – and to decenter the world of work, which is to say, the production of human needs. This is because the hegemony hinges on a claim that the high value of intellectual and entrepreneurial labor by the bourgeoisie legitimizes its privileges. However, the same paradox is at stake. Under capitalism manual jobs in particular are deliberately designed to be repetitive, oppressive, and exhausting for the maximization of the surplus value. Therefore, it is difficult to abstract manual jobs from the exploitative working conditions in which they are embedded. On the other hand, there are other manual jobs that by definition derive from capitalism but seem destined to deliver little if any positive meaning such as security guard. Nevertheless, despite dire conditions, some practitioners can create and enjoy bits and pieces of their manual jobs, as demonstrated. This might serve as a cultural ingredient from-below for constructing a culture that overcomes the hierarchy among different jobs and types of labor.

The question of the meaning of work has a distinct importance in itself. However, it was also a trope, a means for me to examine workers' experiences at work beyond the axis of resistance-compliance, which have too much consumed the attention of critical researchers. That said, in the next chapter I investigate the question of resistance at work.

4

Compliance and Resistance at Work

In the second chapter I introduced the neighborhood and a working-class couple, shared general observations about the subjective experience of wage work and explored two aspects of working-class life other than wage work, namely proletarianization and entrepreneurism. I then moved into the world of work, investigating its meaning while intentionally skirting the question of resistance. Now I face the main issue, namely working-class resistance and compliance.

Considered from the particular angle of resistance, the recent literatures on the working class has parted along the lines of a division of labor. Labor movement literature focus on and deepen the analysis of resistance.[1] On the other hand, the sociological literature of ordinary life (which might also be

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1   Jennifer Jihye Chun, *Organizing at the Margins: The Symbolic Politics of Labor in South Korea and the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Ruth Milkman, *La Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the Us Labor Movement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006); Michael Burawoy, "From Polanyi to Pollyanna: The False Optimism of Global Labor Studies," *Global Labour Journal* 1, no. 2 (2010); Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*; John Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves* (London: Routledge, 2002).

read as hegemony) uncovers and examines compliance interrupted by exceptional moments of resistance.[2] Although the division of labor between these two genres is reasonable given their analytical concerns, in the end we are left with labor movement studies biased by romanticism and studies of everyday hegemony flawed by deep pessimism. Developing independently but in parallel, the empirical and theoretical findings of these two genres usually do not correspond.

Whereas the last chapter on collective mobilizations will engage with the labor movement genre, this and the next speak to the genre of ordinary life. Before the investigation of collective mobilizations, which are by definition rare but explanatory events, this chapter takes a broader look at the variety of resistance and compliance, and their interplay. Transcending the twin traps of romanticism and pessimism, I will propose a synthesis of the two genres as well as theoretical conclusions at the end of the last chapter.

In this chapter, I first examine capital's struggle against workers as it is perceived by the workers themselves, revealing the relationality of class struggle. In the second section, I present three daily interactions of different groups of workers about resistance. The third section is about compliance, which leaves a deep mark on resistance. But without first thoroughly examining compliance, one cannot explain why resistance is weak, why resisters generally fail, or why they seem not to try hard enough. The chapter ends with theoretical conclusions about compliance.

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2   Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*; Pierre Bourdieu et al., *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*; Kefalas, *Working-Class Heroes: Protecting Home, Community, and Nation in a Chicago Neighborhood*; Loïc Wacquant, "Three Steps to a Historical Anthropology of Actually Existing Neoliberalism," *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* 20, no. 1 (2012); James G Carrier, "The Trouble with Class," *European Journal of Sociology* 53, no. 03 (2012).

§ 4.1   The Struggle of Capital

It is necessary to sketch capital's struggle to maintain and expand its domination over the working class in order to capture the relationality of class struggle. I will present a brief depiction of how the people of İkitelli experience and perceive capital's efforts and the working conditions that follow from them.

4.1.1   *Deprivation of Conditions and Rewards*

Many workers, especially relatively older ones, mention concrete instances of being deprived of proper working conditions and rewards in recent decades. I presented Cihan, a craftsman, in the previous chapter. Bülent (1972) is his close friend. The two met in 2003 in a factory where they were coworkers, and became "comrades" over the following years. With his knowledge of religion and high moral standards, Bülent was Cihan's mentor at first. The two, together with another friend, would read the Koran and discuss with the lead of Bülent. When I met them in 2010, the third had gone his own way, while Bülent and Cihan had an equal and admirable relationship. Bülent had not developed his occupational skills as much as Cihan and had remained a semi-skilled worker. The following, from an interview with them, is apropos:

— Cihan: In the private sector especially after 2000, things got worse. Fringe benefits were gone, for example; dry wages are all we gotten after that. We used to have premiums;[3] they are gone with everything else. Also, payments for overtime were reduced.

— Bülent: Crises serve bosses. During a crisis they decrease the standards … they prune premiums and other things away. And when the crisis is over, they find a pretext to not introduce them again.

— Cihan: It works like this: The boss says he cannot make a certain payment because the firm is in a critical situation. Using this

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3   Although premiums might imply several different types of payment, the Turkish word is "ikramiye," which strictly means the premium payments equal to wages, given at most two or four times in a year. Premiums used to be common in factories above a certain size, unionized or not.

> opportunity, he reduces or brings a certain benefit to an end and this change becomes permanent.
> — Bülent: In the firm where I am working now, the boss cut the premiums during crisis of 2008 and never restored them.

Many workers are not as articulate as Cihan and Bülent, but the points they raise – the decline of fringe benefits and the exploitation of crises by employers – are almost universally shared observations among workers. A recently retired factory worker, Ercan (1966) points to other benefits that had also become things of the past:

> Not long, five or six years ago, many workplaces used to give out some supplies regularly. … Big factories used to have kindergartens, now they are all gone.

Since he has been working in the very same workplace since 1977, Fethi has a privileged view from which to make comparisons. He takes a keen critical stance. He notes that they used to have four premiums, supplies, and payment for transportation, but all of these fringe benefits are gone except a package they received during Ramadan, which the employer fills with "the cheapest stuff." "The bigger and richer he grew, the stingier he became." Needless to say, production and the pace of work have continuously increased. As a devoted AKP supporter, Fethi from time to time – especially in pensive moods – admits that AKP has "oppressed the working segment," and is "always taking up with bosses … strengthening their hand."

Muzaffer, whose story I began in the previous chapter, was fired from a unionized factory job during the 2001 crisis. After a depressing four-months search, the job he found merely offered minimum wage, one third of what he used to earn. It was a "shock," he recalls, as he became destined for just minimum wage ever after. As a high school graduate, Muzaffer remembers that at the end of the 1990s he decided not take the civil service exam; civil servants were earning less than half of what he did at the time.[4] He regrets it, saying:

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4   As a member of the middle class born in 1981, even I can remember the depiction of civil servants as especially deprived in daily conversations and in popular culture in the 1990s. The depiction of civil servants in the television show *Olacak O Kadar* and Erkin Koray's 1999 song,

"At those times [the 1990s] labor had a worth, not now." He compares his relative situations as follows: "I worked there [in the unionized factory] for three years. I was a tenant at the time, and I managed to buy this apartment. Now we cannot even feed ourselves even though we don't pay rent."

A worker does not have to be middle-aged to have experienced the deterioration of working conditions. Erkan, a reticent, young man among the detached survivors, complains that he was earning the same wage in 2013 as he did in 2006 when he first began working a factory job. "I earned there the same wage I am earning now" is a throwaway phrase I heard in İkitelli many times. In his job as a janitor, Erkan was not unionized, but the white-collar workers were. He learned that even their premiums were removed. Erkan again began working in a factory and talks about deteriorating conditions, citing his coworkers:

> They [the management] have pruned rights away. Premiums have been reduced, the lunch break has been shortened.

Doğan, the young craftsman, also reported that premiums were recently canceled in his new unionized job. Fatih had a similar experience in his nonunionized factory. He interprets the change with a popular narrative of *good fathers, bad sons*:

> When the father was running things, the workplace had four premiums. … When their father passed away three years ago, his disgraceful sons reduced them to two. … Moreover, we work often overtime, but there is an almost three-month delay for overtime payments. They

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Memurum Ben, are among such examples from popular culture. However, when I became a university student in 2001 and proceeded toward graduation, civil service became a popular option even among my schoolmates and other circles with which I am involved due to worsening employment conditions in the private sector, even for white collar workers. Civil servants are recruited with a centralized national exam since 2002. In that year, 1.3 million people took the exam for just 50 thousand positions. By 2012 the number of exam takers had risen to 3.5 million competing for roughly 80 thousand positions. See Devlet Personel Daire Başkanlığı, accessed May 10, 2015, http://www.dpb.gov.tr/tr-tr/istatistikler/kpss-istatistikleri-218.

make you sign a paper when you begin the job. It says that you will work overtime whenever it is needed.

Lütfü is recently retired. He worked in a buffet in an Esenler bus station and retired while working in a coffeehouse, a job he is still doing. My initial impression was that he was a man of peripheral job. Then, I learned that from 1995 to 2002 he worked in a unionized textile factory and fired due to the crisis. He and his wife Şükrüye remember the fringe benefits, such as generous food supplies. On the other hand, Lütfü notes that the union was ineffective for the following reasons:

> Workers' rights existed before September 12, but they were all removed afterwards. Unions were unions before then. The military took the rights from the worker. Now the unions are all pro-boss, just like the laws.

As he is from Trakya, Lütfü's left-leaning political attitude is no surprise, but his knowledge and interest in unions was unpredictable.

Another recent retiree from Trakya, Ercan, is not as articulate, but has a clear idea of the situation:

> Are there any unionized workplaces left? Bosses drove most of them away. There is no organization, no workplace, that defends the working segment anymore.

Cengiz, a veteran factory worker involved in two failed unionization struggles, is more precise and is knowledgeable of the statistical data: "After 1995, towards 2000, the unions died down. The bosses killed them." With a recent unionization struggle behind him, Nafız explains:

> These are tough times for unionizing. Whenever the worker will be sought after, will be worthy again, then maybe unionization will be possible. But now it is very difficult.

These are the times when neither workers nor their wages are valuable. Nezahat (1940), my second landlord in the neighborhood and wife of a retired worker, expresses a common worry and wish of the elderly for the new generation:

Wages used to count for something. You could fill your string bag, but now it is very difficult. May god help the minimum-wage people.

4.1.2 *Casualization*

Making the employment relation more casual and insecure is arguably the main strategy of capital's assault in the reign of neoliberalism over the last four decades. The more insecure this relation, the weaker labor's on-the-job bargaining power, and thus the weaker the opportunities to expand labor`s rights. This is an important condition to coerce laborers to work more for less pay, one of the main mechanisms for firms to outlast the competition and increase profit. I will show how job insecurity has increased in three types of organizations: relatively large firms, relatively small suppliers to which larger ones outsource work, and lastly subcontractors.

Relatively large firms dispense with fringe benefits and unions as explained above. Additionally, job security in large firms has decreased, as Fikret, a coworker of Cengiz the hard worker, explains:

> Now people cannot continue working in the same factory. There is a new system now. Due to things such as trial periods, etc. they don't let you claim any rights. Before, when you got into a factory and worked properly for six months or a year, the boss won't let you go until retirement. That system has ended.

In response Cengiz-the-young, who works in the same factory, gave examples of how management was trying to get rid of older, experienced workers. To give one example I witnessed, Mustafa, the lay philosopher, was fired without reason other than to hire someone cheaper than him. He had been working at the same workplace for 18 years as a security guard, expecting to get retire there.

There are many cases of firms allegedly going bankrupt, seizing some portion of workers` wages, and leaving them without severance pay. İsmail, Ayla, Emine, and Hanife (Fatih's wife) claimed that such bankruptcies were fake; their bosses opened new factories somewhere else. It was too soon to know in Hanife's case if her boss would do the same, but Hanife was sure of it: with no prior notice her boss secretly removed all the machinery from the factory on

an off day, leaving nearly 250 workers behind. While İsmail and Ayla sued the company along their coworkers, Emine and Hanife did not. Hanife explains: "There is no such a thing as severance pay in textile sector anyway."[5]

The garment industry is the showcase of outsourced production in many countries in the Global South, including Turkey. İkitelli is a particularly good example. Additionally, there are numerous small suppliers in the metal, chemical, and furniture industries in and around the neighborhood. Many suppliers in the garment sector are fly-by-night and offer no security to their workers.

Nuran and Kamil, a married couple with three children, have run their own workshop since 1995. It is a sewing workshop employing some 15 people, including themselves and three relatives. There were times when they had employed as many as 40 people, but they downsized during the last crisis. Before opening the workshop both were workers, and Nuran was a foreman in a large firm. Though the couple had not experienced any turbulence in their lives that would consume their financial resources, like an illness, they were still living in a rented apartment in 2012. They had no car and used a natural gas stove to heat their apartment. Nuran explains:

> They [large, outsourcing firms] make the money. We barely survive. We do most of the labor, but they skim off the money. We toil and moil without any hope of moving up.

As many do, Nuran generalizes her experience. Of course, there are those who grew up and out, like the employer of Tuncay and Zeynep, who employs nearly one hundred workers. However, most garment workshops in the neighborhood are more or less in the same situation as Nuran's. Barely surviving, these workshops provide limited security for workers; many employers even decline to offer even this. Larger garment firms are not much more secure, as we recall from Hanife's case.

Outsourcing serves the interests of big businesses that outsource work by keeping workers at a distance, so they could not claim rights and rewards from

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5   There are also cases of complete insecurity within large, formal businesses. As an example of such informality in formal context, a group of young Kurdish men working in the two largest logistics companies were unregistered. Their working conditions were horrible.

these firms. On the other hand, outsourcing also serves the interests of aspiring entrepreneurs among the working class, offering them the opportunity for upward mobility, requiring moderate financial resources.

Ali works in a large garment firm as the outsource controller, but earns no more than an experienced production worker. He is responsible for monitoring the quality, quantity, and timing of production in the supplier workshops. I met Ali in an ironing and packing workshop run by Erkan (1982) employing nearly 30 people. As Ali admits, the purpose of outsourcing from the firms` point of view is to lower the cost of labor by making it less formal. Ali's managers have convinced him that even for large firms, profit margins are low.

In this configuration, working conditions in small garment workshops are structurally destined if not designed to be insecure. Insecurity means a high level of informality, low wages, long and flexible working hours, frequent wage payment delays, and virtually no severance pay. It is not uncommon for firms and employers disappear in the night, along with unpaid wage, not to mention severance pay. This setting is contentious, not because workers resist or have demands, but because the situation is so tenuous. Even humble wages are often unpaid. Zeynep casually reports that her boss openly carries a gun in his waistband all times in the workshop.

As a young employer in an ironing-packing workshop, Erkan explains the prevalence and ease with which payment is withheld:

> There are many employers who close their shops and disappear for a while. The employees suffer from thim. … Those who go bankrupt do not suffer, their workers do. For example, if I wish, I can withhold wages for two months and no one react. I can manage it by giving 100-200 TL to each [worker], around one-tenth of their wage. With the money [I pocket], I can buy an apartment or a shop. I can do that, if I wish. But to harm these people for my own well-being … there is no good in that.

Although he is a good man and would not commit such an immoral action, Erkan pays the social security premiums of only 5 relatively skilled workers among the 30 workers he employs.[6]

İsmail (1960), an employer in a sewing workshop, is harsher. He admits that he is annoyed with many of his workers and wants to beat some of them from time to time. He complains that he is obliged to pay some as "high" as 1000 TL a month. Actually, his workers are employed informally and if we deduct the cost of social security premiums, the difference is around minimum wage. There are cases of employers who use physical violence, especially against dismissed workers who ask for their unpaid wages. Cases of individual resistance are common in the garment workshop, although most do not involve physical violence. Turnover rates are high; since the option of raising one's voice brings about no change, exit is a more viable strategy.

Unlike outsourced suppliers, subcontractors and their workers operate within the main firm. As is the general trend, workers for subcontractors mostly occupy security and cleaning jobs in private firms. Those who work in the public sector, on the other hand, perform a greater variety of jobs. In the previous chapter I depict İsmail's anxiety and displeasure at working in a public post office as a janitor. Muzaffer's discontent and despisal for his security guard job was mainly due to its insecurity. The subcontractor, for whom he has been working, might force him quit the job without compensation simply by assigning him to a new workplace on the other side of the city.

Mehmet (1977) has worked as a postman in a public post office since 2004, a position filled by a subcontractor. After ten years of service he earns roughly one and a quarter minimum wage, just more than the retirement payment of his mother, who had worked as a public servant. In 2013, Selim and Yaşar began working for a subcontractor at a nearby residential building complex for minimum wage. In the books, the firm fires and re-hires its workers every six

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6 How does he handle inspections while formally employing only one sixth of his actual workforce? He has more on the books – friends, relatives, and acquaintances – who pay their own premiums to enjoy the benefits of social security. On the other hand, inspections are rare and bribes are prevalent. In fact, there are also swindlers who visit workshops posing as state inspectors to get bribe money.

months so that they can never claim a severance pay, evading the labor law. This is what insecurity means for subcontractors` workers.

4.1.3   *Recruiting Informants*

Before ending my discussion about the efforts of employers, I want to disclose a less noticed tactic: the recruiting of informants. Information gathering and therefore informants are crucial for employers in their effort to extend their exploitation and domination over employees. The service of informants is crucial because management might otherwise have difficulty detecting skilled slackers and disobedient workers. Any serious mobilization of workers must proceed in secrecy until it attains a certain number of supporters in the workplace. Workers` power comes from numbers, and without them, individual workers who disobey are vulnerable to reprisal by management. Through informants, employers might discern and immediately crush a mobilization of workers with relatively less damage to the firm.

Among others, Nafız, Cengiz, and Fethi clearly despise "rats" and have discerned how they are recruited. The term they use is not actually "rat" in Turkish, it is "*ispiyoncu*" which is equally derogatory in this usage. Since they are hard-working, experienced, older workers with long periods of employment in the same workplaces, the trio has had the time and motivation to differentiate rats, and realize just how numerous they are. Due to their anger and disgust, they are eager to explain how management strives to turn people into rats and they themselves were also approached with this intent. Serving as a rat brings monetary returns, but simply the job security is enough to turn many into informants.[7]

Cengiz, in one of his more critical moods, gave an epic testimony:

> Everybody can't be a boss. It is not only about money. You have to have skill to divide people. You have to be able to play workers off one another. Bosses don't want workers to become friendly with each other;

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7   For a similar finding on the significance of informants, see Coşkun, *Sınıf, Kültür Ve Bilinç*, 138.

they want them at odds. They always use rats.[8] … God save those who are at the mercy of these demons. They also asked me many times. They told me to write notes about my coworkers, reports, you know. If I had done that, who knows what else they would have asked me to do. They told me things like "we are thinking of making you foreman, can you do that for us?" You know, like a bribe. I never accepted that. You shouldn't be that kind of person.

Other than informants, another operationalized group might be termed agents. Partially overlapping with informants, agents are colloquially know as "adulators" (*yalaka*) and defend management`s position among workers. Some workers believe that employers use these agents deliberately, forcing them to speak to workers, excusing and explaining the reasonableness of wage delays or the cancellation of a certain fringe benefit. In contrast with informants, the management`s efforts to recruit agents is unclear. Some workers might take the initiative to become agents, rather than being coerced to by employers.

4.1.4 *The Scene*

Considering İkitelli, the working conditions of manual workers are as follows: fringe benefits have been eroding and are on the cusp of complete eradication. Minimum wage is universal for new employees, and pay increases for seniority are slow in coming. To supplement their minimum wage, workers long for overtime, which means that their working days last around 12 hours wherever overtime is an option. A wage that is paid regularly and on time is noteworthy, and fodder for conversation in İkitelli. Employers have driven workers so far back that delaying wages has become an easy-to-use and prevalent tool.

For formal workers, a majority of employers pay social security premiums on the minimum wage even if the workers are earning more due to overtime

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8 The original term Cengiz used was "şahbaz." It is an uncommon term, not used in daily Turkish. As a Persian word, it literally means a powerful king or the king of the kings. The only usage of the term in daily Turkish is in a saying: "*şahtı şahbaz oldu.*" It means to do something even worse after already having done something bad. However, I later realized that this saying is sometimes interpreted as synonymous with another, "*kraldan çok kralcı olmak,*" which means "to be more royalist than the king."

or seniority. The privileged workers for whom higher premiums are paid are objects of astonishment and aspiration in İkitelli. They are rare, and will receive higher pensions when they finally retire. The old expectation that one would work at a job – and work hard – until retirement has faded; that privilege seems to be afforded only to a tiny minority who have luck, or some craft, or usually both. There are many accounts of abusive management, especially among informal employees in small workshops. Last but not least, work accidents and work related health problems are common, especially among industry workers.

The ideal of a relatively decent and secure manual job has become a thing of the past. It was far from a norm in the semi-Keynesian, import substitution years, the influence of which might have stretched as far as the crisis of 2001. This ideal had been at least a concrete possibility for a significant proportion of the working class. Some enjoyed it for most of their work lives, some only in certain years, which nevertheless may have sufficed for building some financial security. Having realistic hope, others struggled to get in. Most had at least had some relative who was already in such a job, who might serve as a mainstay in the case of an individual or familial crisis.

Decent manual jobs not only declined, but the conditions of the few that persisted deteriorated on account of the ocean of contemptible jobs that arose. The state almost stopped hiring non-college educated employees except via subcontractors. Ideal jobs are those few jobs in large and/or unionized factories or jobs with public subcontractors, the conditions of which are mediocre. On top of this, the latest crisis of 2008 and the ensuing increase in unemployment lowered both the standards and self-confidence of manual workers and increased the aggressiveness of employers who would remind workers of their dependence on employers to survive in the conditions of capitalism.[9]

Cihan and Bülent vividly describe the ever-increasing power of employers within the workplace, and the impacts of that power on workers:

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9   As a dramatic example of the relationship between economic crises and a loss of self confidence among the working class, Castells and Portes show how the economic crisis beginning in the mid-1970s facilitated the legitimation of neoliberal, flexible employment: "Millions of people have been subjected to harsh living conditions that have made them accept whatever ways out of their misery they could find." See Castells and Portes, "World Underneath: The Origins, Dynamics, and Effects of the Informal Economy," 29.

— Cihan: Employers have a godlike position in the workplace. Like divine kings (*ilah*), they determine everything. Laws and regulations are completely irrelevant.

— Bülent: The state has labor laws, but they are not effective. The boss' laws are in effect there. Why is that? People are unconscious; they are uneducated. But most importantly, they don't have job security. At any moment they are in danger of being discharged. A person who is in danger of being discharged at any moment cannot struggle for rights. … If he has kids, especially if he is a renter, he will internalize the oppression and tyranny. He will not stand up.

§ 4.2 Daily Interactions about Resistance

Generally, workers don't talk much about their jobs, much less about resistance at work. I grew up the child of a professional, the Turkish version of certified public accountant, one who later became a self-employed entrepreneur. I know that upper middle-class men are eager to discuss their jobs because – among other reasons like boasting – they have direct interests: they share information, talk about new opportunities, mention potential customers, ask for specific assistance, enlarge and share their networks, all of which are crucial to get their work done. For the bourgeoisie, the interest is direct and obvious. Talking, networking, and knowledge gathering are even much more imperative in business and trade than in professions.

However, by experience I know there is one occasion in which work becomes a hot topic even among the working class: collective action. In these extraordinary and dramatic occasions, workers become remarkably chatty about work, the management, the action, the daily labor process, coworkers, etc. I participated in many semi-formal meetings organized to evaluate the situation and develop a plan, many of which lasted for more than five hours, consuming our precious Sundays. It was not because it was hard to reach a consensus, but because people suddenly became so willing to talk. As Scott grasps, this is "perhaps because the powerless are so rarely on the public stage

and have so much to say and do when they finally arrive."[10] I will examine this extraordinary mood in the last chapter; however, under ordinary conditions, most working-class people prefer to keep work at work for understandable reasons. In this section, I disclose a couple of interactions I witnessed but in which I did not intervene: people talking with each other about work in a specific way that reveals their thoughts and attitudes about resistance.

4.2.1   *In the Park*

On a sunny summer afternoon, I was hanging out with Mehmet and we passed by one of the few parks in the neighborhood, a tiny one full of people. Unsurprisingly, Mehmet saw a friend, Hakkı, who was there with two relatives, and we started to chat. Mehmet remarked that he was unemployed and looking for a job. Hakkı mentioned that a factory where Arif, a friend of both, had been working was hiring. Coincidentally, Arif was in the park, as well, swinging his child. They called him over. Arif said he wasn't sure, because it was not actually the factory where he worked, but another one of this employer`s factories. Tired and despondent – a common mood among the middle-aged – Arif talked slowly and discouragingly:

— Arif: I have to check on that. I will, but don't get me wrong: I wouldn't have any influence, unfortunately. It's a tough job, anyway. They pay minimum wage for newcomers. Overtime is compulsory. You have to stay, and they usually don't pay fully for the overtime. It's a hard job. Frankly, we are being oppressed.

— Mehmet: So you say don't even try?

— Arif: No, I can't say that if you are unemployed.

— Hakkı: Don't listen to him. He's exaggerating. It's steady work. They pay the wage on time. They always pay social security.

— Arif: Yeah, they do that. But they didn't even give us a raise in June.[11] Who knows what will happen in January.

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10   James C Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale University Press, 1990), 227.

11   In Turkey, annual raises are often implemented incrementally in January and June.

— Mehmet: Can't you unite and raise your voices for that?

— Arif: That doesn't happen; there's no opportunity.

— Hakkı: Do they say it's because of a crisis, as an excuse?

— Arif: Yeah, they talk about that. But it's always the worker who sacrifices.

— Hakkı: Yes, that's the way it is. I know so many bosses who feathered their nest during the crisis.

— Arif: Our factory hasn't slowed down a bit. We haven't stopped working and we hardly keep up with the orders …

— Mehmet: Hakkı, you work in a print shop right? I always wanted to be a pressman.

— Hakkı: That's impossible, you're too old. Bosses look for people younger than 30 who can learn the craft. Craft is important, you know. [After a short silence] Actually it doesn't mean much anymore if you have a craft or not; the boss fucks you anyway. And you know what? Ours is a *hacı* (pilgrim), but that doesn't change anything.

The three men sighed and there did the distance as if looking for hope, either real hope or just the hope of changing the topic. However, they didn't manage and it seemed better to split up. First Arif returned to his son at the swing set, and Mehmet and I continued our walk. This everyday spontaneous dialog contains almost every issue with which I engage in this and next chapter.

First, it reveals how the standards and the expectations of workers have decreased. We are in a climate – as Hakkı argues – and the others concede where basic social security and on time wages make a job desirable. Furthermore, having a craft does not mean much. Hakkı's pride in his craft was followed – after a second thought – by admission that one's craft does not really change the employer's attitude.[12]

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12 Hakkı's reason for changing the direction of the conversation might have been not to sound like he was bragging and/or not to make his friends who do not have a craft feel bad. But considering how he continued vividly and critically speaking about his employer, it becomes clear that he is dissatisfied with the working conditions and his employer. So he might actually mean what he says.

Second, the dialog exposes workers' awareness of being oppressed – including a vague notion of exploitation – finds its way into daily conversation. The fact that they mention "oppression" and curse, but do not explicitly mention exploitation, does not suggest that they are unaware of the latter. Exploitation is unpaid labor, and Arif's explanation of being "oppressed" was about the minimal wages and un/under-paid overtime. Hakkı notes that "the worker pays the piper" and Arif joins in, talking about bosses "feathering their nests." There is a clear hint of unpaid labor transfer from workers to employers. Their evaluation of the economic crisis is almost universal in İkitelli, where workers are sure that employers exploited the crisis. Residents were divided only about whether or not the crisis was a total fabrication.

Hakkı's reference to his employer's religiosity – being a *hacı*, is also worth noting. This emphasis is common among workers of İkitelli complaining about a religious employer. As I discovered, this emphasis is based on a belief that a religious employer would or should not be unjust. Although it is often the case that the worker who makes this point is religious, it is not necessary. It resonates with a working-class version of popular materialism, wherein people enjoys being sarcastic about the contradictions, hypocrisies, and pretentions of those who claim to be pious.[13] The emphasis underscores the contradiction, the hypocrisy of the employer: while he does not give workers the wage they deserve, a sinful act according to Islam, he acts outwardly pious. This empowers the worker's argument and moral strength.

Finally, the dialog exhibits a prevalent mood of despair about personal and collective agency. Mehmet's willingness to collective agency was due to the mobilization experience. The fact that Arif cannot even imagine the possibility of uniting and raising voices – as well as Hakkı's silence on the matter – suggest their disposition toward collective agency: a mixture of hopelessness and disregard. Concurring that it's always the worker that pays in the end, Arif and Hakkı's awareness of the issue, but also their partial surrender, is manifest.

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13   Halle points out that the churchgoing American workers he investigated are skeptical about the moral character of the clergy. They are eager to talk about clergy's contradictions: "a mention of religion is likely to trigger a litany of complaints about the moral failings of priests and the church." See Halle, *America's Working Man: Work, Home, and Politics among Blue Collar Property Owners*, 253-69.

They could not imagine taking a minute to discuss the suggestion even though a friend of theirs – not an outsider – raised it. This mood is prevalent, though not all-encompassing. People like Mehmet have the will and energy from time to time to raise issue, reminding their colleagues that there is another possibility, namely collective action, but even they learn by experience not to expect much response and that it is easy to lose their passion. This is why he did not insist after coming up against the wall of "there is no opportunity" and Hakkı's silence. This interaction is a good example of how assertive and persistent one must be to take on the challenging mission of getting people to discuss the possibility of collective action.

Hours later – hours I needed to process the conversation – I asked Mehmet the possible reasons people are compliant when they seem so aware of their own exploitation. He said, "Of course they are aware. Everybody is aware. But people think individually, not collectively. This is the source of our problem." A seemingly simple but crucial point to which I will return when dealing with the dilemma of morality.

4.2.2 *At Home*

Another Sunday after hanging out with Mehmet, we came to their apartment so that I could tutor Akın, his son, who was in elementary school at the time. When we got there, Sema was hosting a friend of hers, Pervin. Pervin was a young, unmarried, Kurdish woman, living in the next street, and the two became close when they worked tohether in a nearby garment workshop. Pervin was accompanied by two younger siblings and wanted to leave when we arrived, but at Mehmet and Sema`s insistence, she stayed a while longer. Since the living room was the most appropriate place for us to study, Akın and I stayed there, while Sema and Pervin continued talking. Mehmet wandered in and out of the room, because he had become bored. The two women were talking about their shared experience in the workshop, especially the contentious circumstanced of their being laid off. I was both teaching Akın and listening the women, who seemed not to care about my presence. Mehmet only occasionally joined the discussion when he happened to be in the room.

I knew that Sema was laid off a couple months previously and did not receive her last two wage payments. Pervin's experience was the same, and the

women shared their anger and cursed their employer. They also felt sorrow for coworkers who suffered more serious problems due to the unpaid wages. Coming from a self-confident, assertive young woman,[14] Pervin's criticism was more pronounced,[15] and Sema praised her: "No one in the workshop but you stood up for your rights." Pervin accepted this with pride: "That's the way I am." As the pinnacle of their critical performance, Pervin vividly described the day of judgment with enthusiasm and anger, almost as if she was experiencing it at that moment:

> He kept saying all the time that "I never appropriated anyone's right. No one's due will remain with me." But he did just that. But on judgment day, I will see them. They will all stand in front of me and will account for what they did. I will not *helal etmek*[16] my right to them. I definitely will not.

Sema approved by saying "*inşallah*" [hopefully], while Mehmet questioned the employers' religiosity: "Whoever cares about the other world wouldn't do that after all."

Thanks Pervin's energetic, defiant, and hopeful stance – not only for the afterlife, but for this present world – as well as Sema and Mehmet's support,

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14   This habitus is not unusual among Kurdish women under the influence of the Kurdish movement.

15   This occasion was in 2010. In the following years, Sema became much more critical of her employer and employers in general. I became close to Sema much more slowly than to Mehmet. I cannot be sure if Sema changed during these years, or if as we got closer she became more expressive.

16   *Helal etmek* is a loaded Islamic term. *Helal* means appropriate and praiseworthy, while its opposite, *haram,* can be translated as forbidden or sinful. After two Muslims make a transaction, they ask each other to announce that what they are giving each other is *helal*, which means that they consent to what they have given for what they have got. This is what *helal etmek* means. Muslims believe that on the judgment day, people will judge everybody with whom they had a contact on earth and can announce if those people acquired anything unjustly or without their consent. To acquire something from someone without consent is a major sin in Islam. Although controversial among scholars, Muslims from the laboring classes in Turkey widely believe that God forgives people for trespassing against God; however, trespassing other people is an unforgivable sin. Only the person whose rights were trespassed against can forgive on judgment day, which gives symbolic power to the people. What Pervin does is to express her determination to not forgive her employer and to see him punished.

this conversation did not fade into shame and despair like the one in the park. Although there was no mention of collective agency, the praise of the attitude of standing up for one's rights and of individual agency – which is after all the foundation of collective agency – left the door open for other possibilities. One should not forget that the context of this class conformation was a garment shop employing around 20 people, a volatile context designed to render collective action unsuccessful and hopeless. Overall, unlike the former conversation, this talk contained hope and a distinct praise for agency. Second, contrary to many accounts of religion and especially those of Islam, this interaction reveals that in some cases religion empowers the oppressed not only symbolically or imaginatively, but also practically as evidenced in Pervin's subjectivity, which involves both religiosity and strong defiance.

The women's criticism about their employer might seem normal, because of the obvious and aggressive withholding of wages. However, their praise for standing up for one's right in the context of a workshop is unrelated to the unpaid wages. This recalls a prevalent theme of resistance in the talk of workers: there are several workers who do not give up, but rather stand up for their rights. Headstrong [*dikkafalı*] and bullheaded [*dikbaşlı*] are most popular terms used to depict them. Indeed, many people with ambivalent attitudes make note of them. Sympathizers of resistance talk about them with timid admiration, sympathizers of employers do the same with disapproval and disgust, while those who are on the fence talk about them with surprise and fear. They represent the specter of worker resistance, albeit faded, circulating among the working class and perhaps also among employers and management. Their performances of resistance are reported as a one-man-show, however on occasion of collective resistance, they turn into headstrong collective leaders.

4.2.3   *In the Coffeehouse*

After recounting an interaction of men on the street and women at home, I will present another that took place in a coffeehouse, the most prominent public space for men in the neighborhood. The first thing to stress is that men rarely talk about work in the coffeehouse except to share information about employment opportunities. Moreover, it is difficult to coax men to talk about

work when naturally their main purpose for being in the coffeehouse is to play cards or rummikub.[17] I spent plenty of time and significantly improved my card playing skills in coffeehouses, but they were never a good place to talk about work, class, and such boring things. Men take their games seriously and play in a concentrated way, which does not mean that the performance is humorless. To the contrary, especially among the conservative, Sunni working class, coffeehouses serve the same purpose as pubs for the Western working class. For affordable prices, workers try collectively to rid themselves of the tire, boredom, and humiliation of manual wage work. It is no wonder that they avoid talking about work in coffeehouses except on the occasion there is some pragmatic reason to do so.

On a Sunday afternoon I met with Ferdi at a coffeehouse where he was playing cards with three friends, two of whom, Bayram and Hilmi had worked at the Dandy factory. I knew Bayram from the unionization struggle in 2007. He was in a circle of friends with Mehmet, Nafız, and Ferdi. Since this group was among the core leadership of the mobilization effort, Bayram later received something in return for his involvement. Like Ferdi, he became a shop steward (the others in the group of friends had declined due to their criticism of the union branch chief).[18] Hilmi was neither close to the group nor engaged

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17 The urban coffeehouse is a male, working-class phenomenon – working class in a general sense, including white-collar workers. Villages have also plenty of coffeehouses, which are supra-class, as is the general social life of the village itself. Middle- and upper-class urbanites hang out in cafes, gender-blind places, where people go not to play games, but to chat. On the other hand, playing cards and especially rummikub are also popular among the middle class, especially among youth. For the middle-aged middle class, it is a summer activity. Although their number comes nowhere near to their working class equivalents, there are some middle-class gender-blind coffeehouses, mostly in downtown areas where people go mainly to play cards or rummikub. Some of the young males of the middle and upper classes, who do not fit in with middle-class notions of decency tend to be like Willis' working-class *lads*, and might engage in working-class, masculine coffeehouse culture and its card games. Nonetheless, they are few, and this cultural rebellion against class norms does not generally survive beyond the university years.

18 Since they agreed to become shop stewards, Ayhan, Mehmet, and Nafız have resented Bayram and Ferdi for collaborating with the corrupt union branch chief. The union chief himself assigned shop stewards and the trio believed that he had sold the collective struggle to management and attacked them for their resistance.

with the mobilization. After the Dandy factory closed down in 2010, they experienced unemployment or unsteady employment in disagreeable jobs. With this history behind them, they were playing cards in the beginning of 2011 with little chat except about the game. This time I brought up the subject, but the direction it took was independent of my intervention. Bayram had recently begun a new job in a food factory where Ferdi was also about to begin working. I asked Bayram how his new job was.

> — Bayram: It's not too bad except the dirty. It is nothing like Dandy.
> — Hilmi: Do you think my workplace is clean? The guy who dishes up the meals was doing it with his hand! When I first saw it, I said whoa (*çüş*). And you know what, nobody voices any grievance about it. I asked the guy if he serves the managers` meal like that. Things are different for them, of course. When I realized that it would not change, I found some people to make a complaint together. The guy began to serve with a ladle after that.
> — Bayram: Our people are like that. They never voice their concerns. We don't live fully… Nowhere near. We don't even live 20 percent… 10 percent is enough for them. They don't demand more.
> — Hilmi: [after a silence] Is there a union in your new place?
> — Bayram: No.
> — Ferdi: No.
> — Hilmi: Perhaps you will also unionize there. Three of our shop stewards will be working there.[19]
> — Bayram: The chance would be fine! [*Nerde o günler!*]
> — Ferdi: Don't think it's possible, bro.

The praise for voice and agency in this conversation sounds promising, but the dismay at the end changes the mood. Bayram and Ferdi reacted in such a neg-

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19 Besides Bayram and Ferdi, a third shop steward from Dandy, Ali, was also working there at the time.

ative and discouraging way, Hilmi didn't even ask why; the reasons were obvious: the impact of the crisis and the size of the workshop (nearly 100 workers). As three men who had recently experienced a unionization struggle and two of whom had become shop stewards, the praise for agency is not surprising. This is an example of the subjective consequence of a collective action experience, as I confirmed several times with Ferdi, Bayram, and our common friends. Both reported that they learned and changed on account of the experience.

Second, Bayram and Hilmi lucidly and strongly suggested that people were disturbingly and self-denyingly compliant. While Hilmi specifically talked about coworkers in his new workplace, Bayram raised the bar and made the broader observation. This blame-others talk is another prevalent theme among workers; each time I get confused. I have my doubts, and always think that there is some exaggeration, some desire of the speaker to distinguish himself and brag about his self-awareness and agency. In Turkey there is a powerful meta-discourse about compliance among the popular classes, which is mostly produced and reproduced by a westernized, educated middle class. The generalizations I hear from workers have some dialogue with this discourse.

In fact, Hilmi mentioned that he found others to act together to rectify the problem. Perhaps they had voiced their dissent about the specific issue previously, when Hilmi did not happen to be around to witness it. In the case of Bayram, the contradiction is more obvious, because the generalization he made was broader. Hilmi seemed to suggest unionizing as a challenge to Bayram's boastful generalization. Hilmi thus undermined Bayram's – perhaps unintended – bragging and black-and-white irrigation between those who are compliant and those who are not; Bayram immediately admitted to the lack of agency.

On the other hand, it is obvious that workers do not often lift their voices and act in Turkey, at least not enough to improve the working conditions and tangibly mitigate inequality. Therefore, those who are serious about doing something about these issues would understandably feel lonely and occasionally get angry. This is why such talk confused me. I know that even workers devoted to collective good and to struggle, who mostly act with patience and an egalitarian attitude, talk like that from time to time, especially when they feel beaten and disappointed after a low turnout at a meeting or action. This

means of simultaneously relating to and blaming others is the equivalent of the paradoxical love-and-hate relationship between the intellectual and society, between the party and the proletariat, between the revolutionary and the masses. This time the self-contradictory relationship is within the working class itself, performed at a coffeehouse table while dealing spades and hearts. There is some swagger and truth to that talk, but the ratios vary depending on the speaker and the occasion.

4.2.4   *To Conclude*

With three interactions – on a street, at home, and in a coffeehouse –I depicted how people talk with each other about their working conditions, their employers, and their chances to change those conditions. Awareness of being oppressed and even of being exploited are, but nowhere near pervasive. Resentment toward employers is a part of this awareness, and one version of it is distinctive: noting that the piousness of the employer does not change the outcome much.

Awareness is accompanied by despair about one's personal or collective power to change unpleasant, deteriorating working conditions. The prevalent mood about collective agency is a mixture of hopelessness and disregard, of which is a discouraging environment for those workers who maintain some enthusiasm or hope for such agency. However, praise for standing up, and for individual and even collective agency are far from absent from everyday conversations, as evidenced by the last two interactions. If they move beyond abstract praise, these conversations point to the existence of a few "headstrong" workers who do not give up but stand up for their rights. But this is a largely faded specter of worker resistance. They give some hope to sympathizers, while irritating those who are compliants.

Blame-others talk is prevalent among the non-compliant or wannabes (such as Rıza or İsmail). It is popular to complain that most (even all) people are disturbingly and self-denyingly compliant; a complicated and sometimes contradictory discourse characterized by exaggeration, self-flattery, and some truth. In the following section, I present people who might deserve the scorn of those of who work side by side with them.

§ 4.3   Compliance and the Compliant

Compliance and the compliant haunt resistance and the resistant, and vice versa. Just like the struggle between capital and labor, there is a struggle between the compliant and the resistant, to speak more accurately, between compliance and resistance within the subjectivity of each worker. At the extremes, the compliant and the resistant do not get along with. But the vast majority switch between like moods; nevertheless, people may have some tendencies – open to being made and unmade. One cannot fully understand why resistance is weak, why the resistant are mostly unsuccessful or why they seem not to be trying hard enough without examining the subjectivity of compliance, which leaves its mark on resistance. On the other hand, the compliant also have their eyes on the resistant – some in order to criticize, condemn, or even react against them. Others feel admiration, shame, fear, or perhaps even an urge to reconsider their attitude when observing instances of resistance.

Resistance and compliance are interdependent. This is not only because they exist and interact within the same environment, which might imply the individual, the department, the workplace, the neighborhood, the nation, or even the world: the distinctive feature of workers' strategies to defend their dignity and/or "their interests in response to employer-generated injustice"[20] is that "they are effective only if they are collective."[21] However, there are some occasions where the individual has some opportunity[22] or no other choice[23] but to defend her rights individually, as Bourdieu claims. Therefore, the main reason for the interdependence of compliance and resistance is the necessity of workers to act collectively to defend or expand their rights.

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20   Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves*, 1.

21   Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question* (London: Sage, 1993), 174.

22   For example, if she has structural power like a scarce skill, as in the case of Cihan. For the concept structural power in this sense, see Wright, "Working-Class Power, Capitalist-Class Interests, and Class Compromise," 962.

23   We should not forget that many workers work in micro enterprises. According to TÜİK, 20% of all employees (formal and informal) in Turkey work in the firms with only 1 to 4 employees. See TÜİK, *Household Labour Force Statistics 2011* (Ankara: Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu Matbaası, 2012), 58.

In this section, I explore compliance. The compliant are mostly others. They are everywhere and nowhere. They are as abundant as "others," but as hard to find as "I." This is first of all because those who comply tend to interpret the situation not as compliance, but as the most natural thing to do. They empathize or even sympathize with the employer. They grant him the right to do whatever is at stake, but that act disturbs others who are urging them to criticize and perhaps even act out against the situation. Those who are aware that what they did was to comply prefer not to acknowledge it, even hide it. Few among those who consciously comply (whatever the constraining factors) will explicitly talk of it as compliance. I will examine compliance by presenting both its actors and its observers.

4.3.1   *Compliance of a Senior Superintendent: Adil*

Adil has never said a word about his employer that contained an ounce of criticism. He works in the main building of a clock firm, which employs roughly 300 people all over the country including a large crew of salespeople. Nearly 70 clockmakers, mechanics, salespeople, and managerial staff work in the building. Having worked there since 1993, Adil serves as senior superintendent of the building and enjoys a good personal relationship with his employer. He always talks about the number of people to whom his boss "gives bread," and what a blessed man he is. Whenever Adil's wife or children criticize his boss for making him work long hours or for calling him to work on holidays, Adil either ignores them or actively defends his employer. Even his wife, Yeter, teases him about his submissiveness, saying: "They will hang your picture there!"[24] Indeed, Adil is different than his younger brother Mehmet in terms of his attitudes toward working-class compliance and resistance.

Adil's praise is not limited to his employer, but is general, as I often witnessed his deference to other people's employers. When his sister-in-law, Ayla, complains about her employer (the one who created the abusive work environment described in the previous chapter), Adil intervenes: "Why are you

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24   To hang someone's picture on the wall means to praise that person. In Turkey, there is a public code of hanging Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's picture in almost every room of public buildings. In many working class homes, I saw pictures of the grandfather, and sometimes of the father, himself, on the wall. This practice is not common among middle class.

talking like that? You have a job. This is a wonderful thing. You work. You make a living. He pays your premiums. The man gives bread to so many people." Since Ayla knows her brother-in-law well, she changes the subject. Whenever he wants to remind someone how many people an employer provides for, he multiplies the number of employees by four to include their families and magnify the benevolence of the employer. He further instills this attitude in his son Koray. For example, Koray was with us once while I was having a long conversation with Ayla. Due to the conditions she faced in her workplace, Ayla was critical about her specific employer but tended to generalize her criticism to employers in general. Koray felt the necessity to intervene and twice said that "not all bosses are bad," though no one had specifically said that they were.

Following from Adil's statements about his employer, some of his coworkers perceive him as an "adulator," as demonstrated by following conversation between Mehmet and İbrahim, a former coworker of Adil. İbrahim was discussing business with Mehmet at his real estate agency, when he realized that Mehmet was Adil's brother.

— İbrahim: Adil! The one who works for Zade clock?
— Mehmet: Yes, he is my older brother. He has worked there for a long time; he is on good terms with the boss.
— İbrahim: Of course the boss loves him, he does whatever the boss says. He is an adulator. He even had Cevat fired.

İbrahim's candor was unusual; from the way he spoke it was obvious that he was angry with Adil and could not hold back his feelings. Mehmet could say no more than "don't believe everything you hear." Later I heard a similar comment from someone else, whose relative worked with Adil. To assess whether the accusations were founded would require special investigation; it was none of my business.

Adil was not getting a high wage. He never told me typically, I did not ask, but from Yeter and Koray I deduced that his earnings were no more than twice minimum wage. Considering that he had worked in the same workplace for nearly twenty years and that he put in significant overtime, the amount was ordinary. The fact that Adil also holds strongly authoritarian political attitudes perfects the image of the compliant worker popular in left-wing circles. He

never misses the chance to criticize protesting university students on television, calling them "anarchists," "terrorists" etc. He is a devoted AKP supporter, strictly defending the government's mainstream arguments. Once when he learned that I had visited the Tekel workers' resistance camp in Ankara in 2010,[25] he protested: "Are you a CHP supporter? Why did you go there?" Adil is not rude and he does not care much for politics. He never made such comments in an insistent or assertive way. Perhaps he helped me in some esteem, so we never had a real political debate. Both of us knew our differences.

Is there a limit to Adil's compliance? Certainly there is. I never witnessed him say anything negative about his employer, but one Saturday evening while we were chatting in his apartment with guests including neighbors and some relatives, Adil received a call at 21:00 to go to his workplace and monitor the delivery of some furniture. While leaving, Adil swore at the manager who had made the call. Otherwise un-extraordinary, this is only worth mentioning because it was Adil. I learned of a more concrete case of noncompliance from Koray. He told me that a few years ago, Adil had declared to his employer that he would leave the job if he had to continue working such long hours. According to Koray, the employer did not compromise and Adil left, but the employer later called him back. Nonetheless, Koray concludes the story by saying: "Same ole, same ole. Nothing has really changed." I could not learn the details of this resistance from Adil because he would only confirm that "something like that" happened.

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25 The state-owned tobacco enterprise, Tekel, was privatized in 2008 and nearly ten thousand workers would lose their jobs. The government offered them super-flexible, public jobs with much less desirable working conditions. As a reaction, nearly ten thousand workers from all over Turkey protested in the capital and initiated a sit-in in the middle of Ankara. They built a tent city, and protest became the top issue of national politics and media. It was a rare moment when the working class had a public, political presence in Turkey. See Nuray Türkmen, *Eylemden Öğrenmek - Tekel Direnişi Ve Sınıf Bilinci* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012).

4.3.2 *Familial Compliance: Selim*

The second person I will present is Selim. Selim was a neighbor in my second apartment building: a kind, social, and funny man. Thanks mostly to the efforts of him and his wife, Beyhan, four families in the apartment building had developed a close relationship such that almost every other day they met together in the evening in some apartment, usually Selim and Beyhan's. Relations among the couples were far from perfect; tensions sometimes flared. However, they stuck together for the year I was there. They accepted me into their group, and I had a good time on these crowded, boisterous, jovial evenings. It was an atmosphere that one could easily romanticize, as even my neighbors did from time to time saying: "you cannot find such good relations among neighbors as what we have here in any other apartment building around." It was mostly Selim who called and gathered people together. He did not hesitate to host and feed people, a precious generosity, given his working-class conditions. I knew Selim as a generous community man, but his performance at work was unexpected.

Selim did not like his job and was always complaining about it. He complained mostly about the physical toll – he was a porter–, not about his employer, who was his cousin.[26] In time I understood that there was more to it than the lack of criticism. Selim was explicit: "Whenever workers gather to go to the boss to complain about something, I find an excuse and disappear." Telling this smilingly, he meant that he disappears so as not to join the collective grievance. I often witnessed Selim talking like this and the following is one of the most striking examples. One weekday evening I was with Selim, Yaşar, and Yaşar's daughter, Zeynep, in Yaşar's apartment. When Yaşar's son, Tuncay, came after working overtime, I asked him if he gets the appropriate payment for overtime work. Thus we all began talking about pay, social security premiums, etc. At some point Selim began:

> — Selim: You know what? The other day inspectors came to our
>   workshop. We later learned that a kid had made a complaint to

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26   The brother of Selim's employer was actually a well-known businessman in the garment sector on account of his close relationship with president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Selim often complained that he had chosen the wrong cousin to work for.

the ministry. He had complained that we got social security premiums for only minimum wage and we worked until 8 every day. Stuff like that. The boss knew about the visit before they came. You know, he is my cousin. They called me and couple other guys beforehand and explained to us what to tell the inspectors: that we earn minimum wage, nothing more, and that we stop working at five every day. So when the inspectors came, the boss ordered food for them and they ate. Then the inspector called me and those other guys, and I told him what they told me to say. Because of the inspection we got out at five that day; it was like a holiday. The boss put some money in their pockets and the inspectors gave up the name of the kid who made the complaint. The next day the boss called that kid and sacked him. That kid was short, like a gypsy or something. The boss would have fired him anyway; he was complaining about everything.

— Alpkan: Didn't you feel sorry about it?

— Selim: For what?

— Alpkan: Because of the kid, because you lied to the inspector.

— Selim: What can I do? He is my cousin.

— Yaşar: What's there to complain about? The man [boss] pays the premiums. What would it matter?

— Selim: To be fair, our boss pays the premiums every time. He never misses a payment.

— Alpkan: Selim, you were complaining to me about that couple of days ago.

— Selim: It doesn't make much difference. Even those who get the lowest premiums end up with a retirement wage of 800 liras [implying that it is fair enough].

This conversation erased my romantic notion that such a group of neighbors could be an authentic bastion of emerging working-class solidarity. I was shocked by Selim's admission of wrongdoing – he blamed and belittled the worker with racist overtones – as well as by Yaşar's eagerness to support Selim. The kinship bond, he reminded himself and us, is an excuse for compliance to

a certain extent. Nonetheless, Selim showed no signs of guilt. The way he answered my question with a question was telling: it revealed that Selim did not really believe what he did was bad. He might feel otherwise in a deeper level of his consciousness, but on the surface that he shares with the outside world, it was no problem for him. He legitimizes and defends what he did, rendering the excuse irrelevant or at best peripheral. There is not even a hidden transcript: the kid was to blame and his employer was to be praised for paying premiums at all, no matter that he paid less than he was supposed to. Furthermore, the unjust situation created by the employer, that is, getting the lowest retirement wage in the future, was something to be contented with. Selim had no hesitation to tell this story as such. He shared it with friends without any expectation of being judged or criticized.

I reminded Selim that he did not enjoy any obvious privileges in the workshop as a result of his kinship with the boss and the extra services he provides. He receives a wage slightly higher than the minimum, normal for his ten years of seniority. His premiums were paid in portion to minimum wage and he was working as a porter, one of the worst positions in the workshop, according to him. The only thing he received in turn was a vague job security, an implicit promise that he would among the last of persons to be laid off. He actually complained about his job all the time.[27]

If they worked in the same workplace, Fethi, Cengiz, Nafız, and many others would probably have called Selim a "rat," "adulator," or "boss' man." He never voiced that he actively spied on his coworkers' activities; however, he had no reason not to, since he eagerly disparaged workers who caused "trouble." Once a troublemaking worker is demonized, there is no room for moral questioning. This moral setting also explains the contradiction between Selim's performance at work and his generosity and community orientation

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27 Another of Selim's potential excuses was night-blindness severe enough to entitle him early retirement. Because of that, he was not confident about his chances of finding alternative work, and was not really able to perform his construction craft. This might be an excuse for behavioral compliance, but not for intellectual compliance, as the case at hand shows.

in the apartment building. The way he holds back from saying anything negative about his employer is also related to this moral fiction. If Selim admitted his employer's misbehavior, he would have to admit his own complicity.

Selim's case – working for kin – is not uncommon in Turkey, where employers' preference to employ kin or *hemseri* is a well-documented and intact social norm.[28] This does not mean that all workers who have kinship relations with their employers act or think like Selim; however, we can assume the tendency, which explains the durability of the preference.[29]

What about the limits of Selim's compliance? Consider a scene in my apartment just a couple of weeks later (I also hosted the neighbors): this time at Sinan's insistence, we kept it exclusive to men and we bought beer. Sinan, İsmail, Selim, and I were chatting and drinking. As I explained in the previous chapter, Sinan is a skilled glass worker, a craftsman, working in a union job. I asked, and he explained his working conditions and compensation. He was earning more than double minimum wage and his social premiums were being paid in proportion to his actual wage.

— Sinan: Just recently a foreman retired and he began to get 1,600 lira [two and a half times minimum wage] as a retirement wage. If I managed to work here until my retirement, I will get 1,300 lira as a retirement wage.

— Selim: The "disgraceful" [his boss] pays premiums on minimum wage. A foreman retired the other day; he is getting 600 lira. The man was shocked, devastated.

However, this did not mean Selim had changed his attitude. In the following weeks and months, he continued to tell stories like the former one, in line with his usual compliant stance. It was a momentary criticism perhaps encouraged

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28   Alan Duben, "The Significance of Family and Kinship in Urban Turkey," in *Sex Roles, Family and Community in Turkey*, ed. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı (Bloomington: Indiana University Turkey Studies, 1982); White, *Money Makes Us Relatives: Women's Labor in Urban Turkey*.

29   In the next chapter, with regard to the dilemma of coworkers, I will present at least one case where workers do not comply with their employer who is a kin.

by the beer, revealing a deep down resentment about his employer, delicately and deliberately buried for aforementioned reasons.[30]

4.3.3   A Father Foreman at Home: Yaşar

As revealed by the longer conversation above, Yaşar also preaches compliance. He used to be in severe poverty, as his children once explained, and several people still deem him to be "*gariban*," which implies poverty beyond working class standards. I witnessed him utter many cheery, grateful comments about employers in general and particularly about the employer of his three children. About their employer, who would make paternalistic gestures – bestowing gifts on the family including paying for the grave of Yaşar's wife –, he would say: "From a stranger [*el*] that favor is more than enough." Despite Zeynep's fierce objections, Yaşar always accepted the employer's gifts. Zeynep hates the employer because, as she states, he exploits favors by constantly reminding her of them.

Yaşar did not like to speak about his own job in construction, but from the few things I heard, I concluded that his image of himself was as self-employed. This tendency is common among skilled construction workers partly due to the organization of the sector. It was characterized by small contractors until the 2000s, and turned into an extremely flexible sector long before the rise of post-Fordism. He mostly worked on small construction sites, namely one-off apartment buildings, usually together with only a couple of workers. Among other things, the small workplace and temporary nature of the jobs do not constitute a supportive environment for workers to exert power. Touraine long ago argued that among different sectors, class consciousness is lowest in the construction industry.[31] Tugal also observed that construction workers living

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30   I did not have the chance to investigate if Selim's attitude changed in his new janitorial job that he began in 2014. I assume he is not acting and thinking in the same way he did in the previous one. However, he has another excuse to get along with the management this time: he is employed informally; he preferred to so as to be able to keep getting his retirement wage.

31   Michael Mann, *Consciousness and Action among the Western Working Class* (London: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1973), 23.

in Sultanbeyli tend to embrace a "small producer orientation."[32] It is no surprise that construction has the lowest unionization rate (2.8 percent) among all sectors according to Ministry of Labor data.[33]

Yaşar defended his children's employer every time his children raised a criticism. For example, when Tuncay came home late and angry after long and unexpected overtime work, Yaşar appeased him and legitimize the employer, by emphasizing that this was the nature of the sector and the clients – that the employer was blameless. Nevertheless, Yaşar advised Tuncay to write down the overtime hours and carefully calculate the overtime pay he was supposed to get. Yaşar controls all the money coming into the household and looks almost like a foreman or a labor agent, hiring workers for others for a commission in return. In this case, though, he gets the lion's share and gives the real laborers only a commission. The employer's paternalistic relation probably serves as a medium to turn Yaşar into a foreman at home, guaranteeing the compliance of three workers, especially the two (Zeynep and Serdar) who were performing critical tasks in the labor process.

4.3.4   Fragile Compliance: Erkan

Many workers give credit to employers and do not see opportunities for workers to extract more from employers, even if they vaguely feel they should. Erkan is a detached survivor and a janitor in a bank. When he made an assertive claim about worker's rights in the course of our talks, he so carefully, never crossed a barrier he had in his mind. In the following moments, he would always give some credit to employers.

> — Alpkan: Do you think that workers get what they deserve in return for their labor?
> — Erkan: No way. Where can they? This is definitely not the case. Where? When you look at the work you do and the money you get… no, it is not just. It should be a little more, I mean. For

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32   Tugal, ""Serbest Meslek Sahibi": Neoliberal Subjectivity among Istanbul' Popular Sectors."

33   ÇSGB, *Çalışma Hayatı İstatistikler 2014* (Ankara: Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı, 2015), 32.

example, the minimum wage… the state should set the minimum wage to, I would say, at least 750 lira.[34] The lowest level, I mean. However, there is such a thing in most places… I mean there are reasonable bosses who give 750 even though the minimum wage is 600. I can give myself as an example. I earn minimum wage according to pay roll, but I also get some money for transportation. I am sure they think our wage is low so they give some more for the road. Actually, they might also do this to lower social security premiums.

— Alpkan: Why do you think workers can't get what they deserve?

— Erkan: The guy [the employer] does not want to earn 100 percent; he wants 200 percent. Greed. The guy doesn't see anything but money. You know the rich… the guy wants to live in comfort. So what happens? He steals from this, from that. That's the way it is. If the guy cares about you, would he give that little money to you…?

— Alpkan: Then why don't workers demand what they deserve?

— Erkan: No one will give anything! So who cares if you demand or not? Let's say, you demand something from me. I will give it to you if it serves my purposes. If not, I won't give it, right? The boss acts as he pleases. If you want my car, I will give it to you if there is something in it for me. This apartment is yours; you use it as you wish.

— Alpkan: What if workers come together and demand what they deserve together?

— Erkan: There is no opportunity for that. Not at all.

— Alpkan: Unions for example?

— Erkan: They look after their own interests. A boss will not give you that money if he doesn't want to. He will give it to the union, and the union will keep quiet. Everybody looks after his own interests, so do most of the unions. They agree with the boss behind closed doors and tell workers: "My friends, we got

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34   Minimum wage at that time was between 630 – 672 liras depending on the employee`s marriage status and number of children. Erkan – unmarried at the time – was entitled to 630 liras.

the best we could. We expect you to respect that." They say that
the boss can't give more, that if you want more, you can leave,
etc.

What do we gather from Erkan's words? First of all, his feeling that workers
do not get what they deserve is intermingled with a modesty and even hesita-
tion: the raise he wants in the minimum wage is only 20 percent. Immediately
after making an assertive claim – "No way" –, he feels the need to praise bosses
that pay even a little more than the minimum wage. He praises "most" em-
ployers, but a little later he goes so far as to claiming that they are "stealing"
from workers. He sharply declares there is no opportunity for collective re-
sistance. And last but not least, he bears a moral pessimism, arguing that eve-
rybody looks after their own interests. In addition to opposition from employ-
ers, this is the reason he believes collective action is impossible. And this
pessimism implies that society is destined to be as it is: an individualistic, fa-
milialistic, competitive hierarchy.

Erkan explains economic hierarchies and injustices along two lines: apply-
ing a structural logic, he observes that when people make more and more
money, they begin to not care about those. On the other, from an individual-
istic point of view, he stresses the characters of the rich and employers, distin-
guishing between moral and immoral ones. If we consider that even social
theorists, who are paid to think and research full-time about these issues, have
not solved the puzzle of structure versus agency, there is little wonder about
Erkan's ambivalence. When feeling critical, he underscores structure; when
less so, he highlights people's good character and that they account for the
majority. Like most workers in İkitelli and probably in Turkey, Erkan is usually
less then critical. He usually prefers individualistic explanations and points to
good bosses or the goodness in bosses. He presents something standard as
generosity, such as the transportation payment he receives in his job as a jan-
itor. He likes to talk about this or that rich person, who according to Erkan
seemed to suffer in the past, but worked hard and rose up out of their situation.
Even though he thinks there is something wrong with the system, he presents
things better than they really are. It is, perhaps, to protect his dignity, because
he has neither hope for nor confidence in change.

To defend our dignity (in a way that takes less effort than engaging in the hard work of collective organizing) we try to interpret an ongoing relation of oppression and/or exploitation as actually not so oppressive. We see our father in our boss, some generosity in his actions, a charisma in his subjectivity, and a charm in his story. There are indeed always less desirable workplaces, so that workers feel they must be thankful for what they receive from their employer. "I have eaten his bread" is a common idiom I heard from Erkan, İsmail, Cengiz, and many others. To love one's own superior, to stick with the idea that he is a good person, that any bad circumstances are beyond his control… These are emotionally relaxing ways to interpret one's economic situation, nor exclusive to the working class. Compliance is an economic stance, because resistance has a price. It requires time, energy, and the ability to manage instability and handle reprisals. It is common that resistance costs more than its rewards. If it involves collectivity, it requires even more time, energy, sociability, leadership, and trust (a precious matter in Turkey).

Erkan has not been resistant so far, unlike his older brother, Cengiz-the-young, whom I will discuss in the next chapter. Nevertheless, Erkan`s compliance involves a certain criticism, albeit fragile. He feels vaguely that there is something wrong with most employers and with the system – and that workers do not get what they deserve. In contrast with Erkan, the other compliant workers – Adil, Selim, and Yaşar – did not express that discontentment during our interactions.[35] Their subjectivity is different, embracing an intimate belief that there is no problem besides exceptional instances of injustice. Many clearly critical workers who desire to stand up for their rights often talk about the compliant, because the latter are an impediment to organizing collective resistance. The discourse of blame-others focuses on extreme cases of compliance, even in the face of extreme denials of rights. I will know discuss such examples.

4.3.5   *Depiction of Compliance by Others*

The first depiction of compliance by others is a conversation among Nafız, Sultan, and Ali about their coworkers. The occasion vividly reveals the tension

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35   On the other hand, a worker can be both expressively critical but submissive in practice, as Rıza demonstrated – although this is probably a rare subjectivity.

and struggle between the resistant and the compliant: the three workers are talking about one group of people and their workplace is unionized, so collective action is real and affordable option. Nafız, Sultan, and Ali are good friends from the gum factory, and they were on the forefront of the unionization struggle there. Sultan and Ali, both Alevis, embraced leadership roles more so than Nafız, and both served as shop stewards after the unionization. Sultan's leading role was pronounced in the organization of the struggle, where she was one of two women who took risks, put in a lot of effort and led the way along with several men from the beginning until the end. Nafız, Mehmet, and many others praise her character.

The new factory recently opened. It is a production unit of a well-known, national food brand and has the same union under which Nafız and his friends had organized in the gum factory. Most of the workers in their new factory were new recruits. The union was not something they had strived for; it was already there. Upon the insistence of their coworkers, Sultan and Ali became shop stewards in the beginning of their second year. Neither were eager for this position, as they explained:

— Nafız: We all worked in Dandy for many years. There was no allegiance of workers to their foremen. Here, people are very faithful. It is weird. The system is different. Management gives the foremen great authority.

— Sultan: I am working there for one and a half years. We got to know people. Just like Nafız said, people grovel in front of their foremen; they are ready to do whatever the foremen ask. Most are like that. They see their jobs as something precious, unobtainable. They almost side against the union. For them the union is something that disrupts their relationships with their foremen. That was why I didn't want to become a steward here.

— Ali: And it is hard to convince them. They don't get it. Plus, they immediately inform their foremen if you test the waters to try to mobilize for something.

— Sultan: I thought these people are not worth it. We would become scapegoats if we did anything. But after they insisted, I couldn't resist and accepted the offer to become steward.

The labor process in the factory gave a relatively stronger authority to the fore-men, and the fact the factory had newly opened meant that workers had not developed solidarity on the shop floor. These circumstances created a highly compliant workforce. Nafız, Sultan, and Ali, on the other hand, had had a re-cent mobilization experience. The different experiences and ensuing subjec-tivities magnified their reading, but the level of compliance of the average worker in the factory was certainly high.

Sultan and Ali put effort into changing the attitudes their coworkers and evening out the imbalance of power on the shop floor. On the other hand, Nafız became the assistant to a foreman and was less engaged in building sol-idarity. Sultan and Ali had minor success, but the management announced in 2014 that the factory would close at the end of the year for operational reasons. In their third year of employment and second year as shop stewards, Sultan and Ali did not have time to do more.

Cihan, a keen observer of compliance by others, had many stories to tell. As a craftsman, he adheres to an interesting, working-class version of Islam-ism, which is a peculiar ideology in Turkey. He is headstrong, has a tough character, and articulates his resentment towards employers, wage labor, and capitalism, as well as towards his coworkers. Some of his stories are hard to believe. He once told me that his coworkers in a small metal workshop em-ploying just 13 workers were so submissive and "adulatory" that they even worked during their 15-minute tea break. The shop did not employ a piece-rate system, so there wasn't even an incentive to receive a bonus payment. I did not entirely believe this, which Cihan understood by my hesitation. He did something to prove it. A couple weeks later he filmed a break with his cell-phone to show that seven workers kept working while the others were drink-ing tea, chatting, and teasing those who were not joining them.

Since Cihan has long been radical about trying to organize workers, albeit with little success, he had accumulated many stories along with his comrade Bülent. Though he was in his thirties, he was already at the beginning of the transition from a revolutionary who cares about coworkers to a "retired" rev-olutionary who derides his coworkers' compliance. In one former workshop where he worked with Bülent, workers were so submissive that many resented Cihan and Bülent because they were not pro-employer. The pair was actually accustomed to that kind of reaction, but in this case, the proportion of workers

opposed to them was great. Once, the employer of the shop grew a goatee, whereupon most of the workers followed suit. Cihan recalled the episode saying: "What form of domination is that? Can you believe it? That was one of the weirdest things I ever experienced. How can I build a relationship with those kinds of people?"

One day in his last workshop, where he had became a foreman, the lunch delivered by the caterer was spoiled. People seemed disturbed by the stench, but none dared to complain, much less call the employer, who was out. Disappointed again, Cihan called the employer himself. While on the phone, workers began to fill their plates, claiming that it only stank a little; Cihan believes the near possibility of conflict with the employer made them anxious. After calling the employer and later the caterer, Cihan managed to have new food delivered, which was well-received and eaten with pleasure by the workers. Cihan told them, as he animatedly recounts: "My friends, without demanding, without making a sacrifice, you won't attain anything."

Similarly, he explains that he has been trying to mobilize his coworkers to demand extra food for their overtime hours: "it would cost him less than 1000 lira for a month. This amount is nothing for him, it is less than a bench made in just two days. But he doesn't want to give even that. Why would he? Workers don't demand it, they don't react." Most of his coworkers continually complain about it but are afraid to speak up. Cihan tells them not to stay for overtime until food is provided, but his efforts have proved futile so far: "Indeed, we might pay a price for doing that. We might be fired, but if we don't do it, this boss' edicts will continue and we'll keep suffering."

He vividly depicts the unsettling degree of submission, in a way similar to other "radicals," such as Fethi, Nafız, and Emin, who are often as angry with their coworkers as they are with their employers.

> Most of the workers in the İkitelli Organized Zone, I believe, have this idea: a worker who does not work hard enough is stealing from the employer. Can you believe that? The employer steals so much from you; what the hell are you talking about? As if the man is getting what he deserves… as if he works in decent conditions… for humane hours… as if he can have a social life and everything is awesome… so

that he says to a guy who doesn't work hard: "you steal from the employer" [*hakkını yiyorsun*]. They steal from you with a ladle, but still you worry about the spoonfull [*Senden kepçeylen götürüyorlar, sen kaşığın muhabbetini yapıyorsun*]. There are such ridiculous mentalities. … They are more royalist than the king. The boss does not need to think of his own interests, these workers already think of them. "Isn't this unfair to the boss?" This is what the guy says. I can't understand how people end up with this psychology? How were they brought to this point?

Because Cihan is radical and impatient for the tasks awaiting a working-class radical, he has a tendency to exaggerate submissiveness among the working class. When less emotional, he admits that many workers hold different attitudes, and that the extremes of submissiveness are predominant among a particular type of unskilled worker working in small workshops, a group with which Cihan had to contend for most of his work life: "the most miserable and unskilled people, who had no position to fill other than the lowest ranks of the private sector."

Cihan's observations correspond to the Bourdieusian approach[36] pointing to the significance of learning and upbringing as explanations of compliance:

The thoughts and discourses of their mothers and fathers play a crucial role in the adoption of this psychology by Anatolian people. For example, when you say to your father or mother, "I got tired at work today," they immediately respond: "Be grateful you have a job and that you are working. Praise Allah, there are people in much worse conditions than you."[37] It is no surprise that a child raised with such a psychology ends up like that. They are inculcated, shaped like that. … Anatolian people know misery; the land and climate are infertile there. Coming from that climate, it is normal that people become like that.

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36   See Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 168.

37   We witnessed Adil and Yaşar act out that kind of a fatherhood.

§ 4.4 Conclusion

I began this chapter by discussing moves by capital to suppress workers' resistance and intensify exploitation. Then I illustrated three types of daily interaction among workers about resistance to uncover how workers talk about these issues. The third section on compliance and the compliant shed light on resistance from the opposite angle. This chapter maps the vast terrain of compliance from which resistance emerges and grows. Here I articulate some theoretical conclusions.

I believe Marxian theories of consciousness and hegemony, which have enriched and broadened radical thought, are nevertheless flawed by a series of false assumptions. The humanism of the Enlightenment left its mark not only on Marxism, but also on all radical currents born in the nineteenth century including anarchism. These theories, especially at their foundation, were deeply motivated by political desires and movements. Revolutionary politics are impossible without great hopes and great expectations. Great hopes ignite great will to struggle for, as they did for socialist revolutionaries throughout the world of until the 1980s.

The Enlightenment assumption undergirding Marxian theories of consciousness and hegemony was that as rational beings, humans have a vested interest to liberate themselves from exploitation and domination and to build an egalitarian society. This interest is hindered by external forces such as coercion and the ideology of the ruling elite. I do not assert that this argument has no truth in it. By abandoning this argument, we do not have to embrace a theory of human nature whose pessimism is as great as the optimism of the Enlightenment.

Nonetheless, the argument is proved wrong by the social struggles of the modern era, and radical thought began to question it after the Second World War. Human beings are not merely rational, nor equipped with an ontological tendency towards liberation. Moreover, culture and subjectivity are much more deep and powerful than the alleged universalism of humanism assumed by the enlightenment. Moreover, the link between individual interests to be free from exploitation and domination, on the one hand, and the collective formation of a society free from those evils, on the other, is far from being unproblematic.

Coercion and ideology (or hegemony) are certainly important. However, they do not work in isolation nor are they even crucial. "Custom makes all authority" Bourdieu quotes from Pascal, encapsulating his own argument about resistance. The obedience the state obtains "results for the most part from the docile dispositions that it inculcates through the very order that it establishes."[38] The legitimation is "extraordinarily facilitated by the fact that it goes on almost automatically in the reality of the social world."[39]

Similarly, Sennett and Cobb show how a crucial part of the work of legitimization is actually done by the workers themselves almost *automatically*. Simply the idea of individual ability accustoms the person "to think that to have individual respect you must have social inequality."[40] Like Bourdieu, Sennett and Cobb situate class relations in a broader web of domination and authority. Analytically exploitation and domination, and also different kinds of domination have important differences. Nevertheless, subjectively people experience, feel, and react to different dominating and/or exploitative authorities in similar ways, whether those authorities are parents, a teacher, a boss, a state official, the rich, their husband, or a member of the dominant race, etc.

For centuries, perhaps millennia, humankind has been living in unequal societies in terms of class, gender, and race, and it is clear that this centuries-old experience has deeply molded cultures and subjectivities. The symbolic power of the dominant has inscribed submission "in the bodies of the dominated, in the form of schemes of perception and dispositions (to respect, admire, love, etc.), in other words, beliefs."[41] These bodily dispositions do not necessarily "pass through consciousness and calculation."[42] These symbolic orders have always been vulnerable to challenge; in fact, they are in constant flux and states of transformation due to such challenges. However, they persist at a higher level of abstraction, except for precious, fleeting moments.

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38   Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 168.

39   Ibid., 181.

40   Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, 75.

41   Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 171.

42   Ibid., 176.

There is a price to be paid in the present for the lost struggles and lost hopes of the past: the depth and prevalence of the naturalization and compliance with which we have to deal today are great, albeit with variations and exceptions. To bend the stick, I claim that which deserves surprise and explanation, is not compliance but resistance. This is especially valid for the versions of resistance, which demand new rights instead of only defending the existing ones.

Except in the case of crisis from above (that is when the dominant does not fulfill their promises to the dominated), a crisis from below (namely a successful political mobilization led by radicals who are destined to be marginal), or an overlapping of both forms of crisis, compliance is the rule of the day. Crisis can be local – occurring in one particular site, such as workshop, and led by just an individual. To define a radical, I do not necessarily mean an articulated ideological radicalism, but those who embrace a more radical criticism of their employers, or of employers in general compared to the average worker's everyday complaints. In practice, though, radicals generally embrace an ideology at some point, because the symbolic power is so strong and prevalent that one needs an articulated, intellectual and emotive ideology: a grand narrative to achieve the hard work of distancing oneself from symbolic power and keeping that distance at all costs.

I owe much to Bourdieu among others who have made this argument about domination; nonetheless I prefer not to confine myself to his theoretical pessimism, which is unyielding in its distance from romanticism. More crucially, probably because of his resolute pessimism, Bourdieu lacks a theory of resistance, or more precisely a theory of mobilization, as he admits.[43] Similarly, while explaining compliance Sennett and Cobb ignore and exclude the existence or possibility of resistance, except for moderate forms of agency such as psychological defense mechanisms and upward mobility.[44]

Building on the foundation I laid out in this chapter, the following chapters examine resistance and propose a draft framework for a non-romantic theory

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43   *Sociology in Question*, 175.

44   For psychological defense mechanisms, see Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, 189-209. For upward mobility, see ibid., 220 and 42.

of subjectivity of working-class resistance. I integrate the theory of compliance outlined in this chapter with views on resistance, such as the abundant practical optimism in Bourdieu's less formal writings on resistance,[45] mundane observations from the sociology of work,[46] and crucially, observations from the social movement literature.

Moreover, my analysis will include an essential issue for resistance that has been largely ignored by all other approaches: the issue of morality. The matter of resisting domination and/or exploitation does not merely concern interest, as argued by both Marxian theories and by Bourdieu, but is also an issue of morality. Interest alone may explain many cases of individual resistance, but especially when it is collective, resistance is a moral question. Radical thought has mostly either ignored morality due to their allegiance to a specific version of materialism, or minimized and euphemized it under the banner of ideology. I will show the significance of morality for class-consciousness and class struggle to critically enhance our understanding of the enigmas of working-class subjectivities. I believe morality is key to understanding why resistance can survive and even – if rarely – explodes into a human condition where "the work of legitimation of the established order is extraordinarily facilitated by the fact that it goes on almost automatically in the reality of the social world" – a human condition where "the social order itself largely produces its own sociodicy."[47]

Contradictions are not peculiar to working-class consciousness. Educated radicals, as well, have "contradictory consciousness," from which I am not exempt. It includes "being a pessimist because of intelligence, but an optimist because of will" – a great contradiction indeed, impossible to manage without moral conviction.

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45   Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*; *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*, trans. Richard Nice (New York: New Press, 1998); *Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market 2* (New York: The New Press, 2003).

46   For example, see Hodson, *Dignity at Work*.

47   Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 181.

5

Resistance and Its Dilemmas

In this chapter, I scrutinize five dilemmas of working-class resistance, which I believe broaden our understanding of resistance by revealing the somewhat hidden predicaments and requirements involved. The dilemmas I examine explain why it is difficult for workers to broaden and advance resistance, why instead it is kept limited and isolated. They disclose why working-class resistance is neither natural nor obvious, but destined to be subjective in the sense that it requires a greater level of agency, effort, and sacrifice than is generally assumed. I do not claim to present all the dilemmas of worker resistance. There are others, and possibly alternate ways of categorizing those I introduce. This is a selection I discerned among the workers of İkitelli.

Below I first investigate the dilemmas of capital, which explain the indestructible nature of worker resistance. Secondly, I briefly discuss other means of worker agency by which agents tries to improve their conditions. Afterwards, I explore five specific dilemmas of working-class resistance, focusing on the stories of five resistant workers.

§ 5.1 Dilemmas of Capital

Although involving many dilemmas, as captured below, working-class resistance against capitalism is indestructible. This is because of a principle dilemma of capitalist domination, namely, its dependence on the working class,

or to be more precise, on the cooperation and discretion of the working class. The real subsumption of labor in capitalism is a process destined to be "internally contradiction ridden" as Cressey and MacInnes succinctly phrase it:

> For even though capital owns (and therefore has the right to control) both means of production and the worker, in practice capital must surrender the means of production to the control of the workers for their actual use in the production process. All adequate analysis of the contradictory relationship of labour to capital in the workplace depends on grasping this point.[1]

Scholars of working-class resistance grasp this phenomenon from different angles. Although superficial compared to the observations of scholars of labor, Bourdieu points out that "the *margin of freedom* left to the worker (the degree of vagueness in the job description which gives some scope for manoeuvre)" can potentially serve as the bedrock of resistance.[2] For Hodson, workers' power rests on their "practical autonomy," namely, "the necessity that employees' creative and autonomous contributions be solicited if the ongoing business of the enterprise is to be achieved."[3] Watson argues that "the principles of freedom and autonomy implicit in the institution of formally free labour" are the main source of workers' power and therefore capital's dilemma.[4] He asserts that the relationship between the employer and the employee centers actually on an "implicit contract," which is essentially unstable as a result of the unstable market context in which it is made. Therefore, in every workplace there is "a constantly negotiated and renegotiated agreement about what goes on and what rewards accrue."[5]

In a much more analytic way, Hyman distinguishes three contradictory goals – that is to say: dilemmas – of capital. The first contradiction is to limit and harness discretion. Discretion is something workers may apply against the interests of capital, whereas capital also needs to harness that discretion and

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1   Cressey and MacInnes, "Voting for Ford: Industrial Democracy and the Control of Labour," 14.

2   Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 204.

3   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 266.

4   Watson, *Sociology, Work and Industry*, 218.

5   Ibid.

apply it to profitable production. The second contradiction springs from the fact that employers require workers to be both dependable and disposable. There is a trade-off between workers' commitment and their flexibility, with which employers are compelled to deal. The last dilemma concerns the strategy of divide and rule. Workers' collective solidarity is a potential threat for the management; however, "cohesive and co-operative relations within the workforce are normally a precondition of an effective collective labour process."[6]

From a broader, more global, and historical perspective, Silver and her colleagues assert that "where capital goes, labor-capital conflict shortly follows." Labor unrest is endemic to capitalism, which entails the recurrent making, unmaking, and remaking of working classes on a world-wide scale. This process tends to result in a gradual rise in wages and improvement of working conditions in new sectors and geographies where capital is invested, which triggers the next transformation in a cyclical pattern of the organization of production.[7]

Therefore as even Bourdieu affirms, resistance, "passive or active," "individual or collective, ordinary or extraordinary" is present and focuses on "escaping the most unpleasant forms of labour and exploitation."[8] Nevertheless, extraordinary resistance is rare by definition, and the struggle between labor and capital is "characterized less by the major battles than by chronic running skirmishes."[9] Even though capital has its own dilemmas, his are the dilemmas, these dilemmas of the dominant are not of the same kind as those of the dominated. Capital's dilemmas imply that resistance against domination cannot be eliminated and will always present. The dilemmas of class struggle among workers reveal, on the other hand, why it is extremely difficult for resistant

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6 Hyman, "Strategy or Structure? Capital, Labour and Control."

7 Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870*; Beverly Silver and Savas Karatasli, "Historical Dynamics of Capitalism and Labor Movements," in *Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*, ed. Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Beverly Silver and Lu Zhang, "China as an Emerging Epicenter of World Labor Unrest," in *China and the Transformation of Global Capitalism*, ed. Ho-fung Hung (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

8 Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 173 and 87.

9 Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 265.

workers to nurture their resistance to a level of – not necessarily revolutionizing but – at least shaking the capitalist structure. In short, the dilemmas of capital's domination insure the survival of resistance against its *domination*, while the dilemmas of worker resistance insure that the expansion of *resistance* will be difficult.

§ 5.2 Other Options

> "Riot" – itself a clumsy term which may conceal more than it reveals – is not a "natural" or "obvious" response to hunger but a sophisticated pattern of collective behaviour, a collective alternative to individualistic and familial strategies of survival. Of course hunger rioters were hungry, but hunger does not dictate that they must riot nor does it determine riot's forms.[10]

Although Thompson's statement concerns a specific type of resistance – namely riots – it is reasonable to adopt the idea to resistance in general. To improve one's conditions, resistance is but one path among many. Looking at İkitelli, I discerned at least four other strategies, all of which involve agency. Obviously, they are not mutually exclusive.

The first one is to become the guardian of management's interests by informally serving superiors through flattery, informing, or acting as their agent. This strategy is more than mere compliance, involving complicity in a much more pronounced way. It is assumed to bring rewards, such as job security, "fringe benefits," and mobility within the internal market of the firm. As we saw in the experience of Adil and Selim and in other accounts, it can indeed bring such rewards. I begun interpreting this as a distinct strategy when a young worker, Mustafa – who is devoted to his dignity – told me: "Some people try to get familiar with boss, manager, or foremen by any means to improve their position. I never do that."

The second strategy is hard work, which is assumed to increase higher job security and the possibility of promotion. "If you work hard enough, the boss will do you justice, he will value you," I heard from a young worker who had

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10 Edward Palmer Thompson, *Customs in Common* (New York: New Press 1991), 266.

been working in the same garment factory for nine years. Although the sentiment involves wishful thinking to an extent, it is not mere fantasy and one often hears similar if slightly less optimist versions of the same statement. Many workers "grit their teeth to get somewhere" as Aydın once told me about his hardworking friend İbrahim. Finding favor with the superiors is an important strategy for workers, and flattery or being an agent are not the only ways. By working hard, a worker may increase her labor market value, which might motivate management to give something in return. Indeed, we have seen that some hard workers have been working in the same workplaces for a long time, despite critical and resistant attitudes. As discussed in the previous chapter, citizenship – purposive activities to enhance production that are above organizational requirements – is actually a strategy for defending dignity at work, and it is more prevalent than anticipated, as shown by Hodson.[11] A more specific version of this strategy is working hard to acquire and develop skills, as we see from the stories of craftsmen, most vividly in the case of Cihan. As pointed by Wright[12] and elaborated on by Silver, in addition to associational power, workers may potentially have some structural power – such as "marketplace bargaining power"[13] – if they possess scarce skills that are in demand by employers. Watson also attests this potential as an important exception of the general rule.[14]

As I discuss in detail in the first chapter, entrepreneurism and its variations ranging from a full-time job to making a real estate investment are the third strategy. The fourth strategy is to search for a good job. This strategy is built on notions of "freedom" of "free labor," and involves the "exit" option constructed by Hirschman.[15] I mention before that good jobs, which once meant public employment and unionized factory jobs, have receded in number. However, what is at stake is not the ideal job but a better job and there are always better jobs strive for. It can be argued that this is a less salient strategy. In many cases it does not require agency, but involves a fantasy or hoping and

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11   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*.

12   Wright, "Working-Class Power, Capitalist-Class Interests, and Class Compromise," 962.

13   Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870*, 13.

14   Watson, *Sociology, Work and Industry*, 220.

15   Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (Cambridge: Harward University Press, 1970).

waiting for good news from a distant relative or friend. Nonetheless, there are active ways of searching for a good job, whereby people apply persistently to a specific workplace or mobilize their networks of kin, hemseri, or political allies to convince someone who can "pull some strings" (*torpil*) to get the job seeker into a good workplace. For example, Sinan explains that he strived for ten years to get his unionized job. Doğan was surprised when he landed a union job, since he did not have a *torpil*. Erkan tries to convince a who works for a public subcontractor on relatively good terms to help Erkan find work there, as well. Fethi and his wife, Güldane, pressure a relative working in a foreign garment firm with decent conditions to help their daughter-in-law, Hanife, to get in there. Persistence, chance, sociability, and social capital are important to this strategy.

As should be clear, resistance is not a natural response to the indignities and exploitation faced in work life, but a specific strategy a given individual might prefer among many. Below I present and discuss cases of resistance and the dilemmas they involve.

§ 5.3 The Principal Dilemma of Worker Resistance

Cengiz, an experienced hard worker, embraces a level-than-average of criticism, still less than Cihan and Fethi (see below). Since 1995, he has been working as a powder coating machine operator in a factory that produces ovens and other electrical heating devices. The firm employs around 200 production workers, and most of its production is for export. As in his testimony about the making of "rats," mentioned in the previous chapter, Cengiz can poignant from time to time: "Not everybody can be a boss. It's not only about money. You have to have the skill of dividing people. You have to be able to play workers off against one another."

As an example of a resistant worker, I use Cengiz to examine what I believe is the principle dilemma of worker resistance. Under the conditions of – especially neoliberal – capitalism, workers, like all others, are dependent on entrepreneurs to find jobs and enjoy one's share of the wealth created by capitalist production. The market itself does the work of legitimizing the order, recalling Bourdieu: "the work of legitimation of the established order is extraordinarily

facilitated by the fact that it goes on almost automatically in the reality of the social world."[16] I am unsure if this applies to other forms of domination, but the domination by the market and by the bourgeoisie through the market perfectly exemplifies Bourdieu's point. Dependence conditions even resistant workers to moderate their resistance, be ambivalent, and feel incompetent to challenge capital in more aggressive way.

According to Cengiz, his employer's worst habit is lying constantly. He often calls his employer "dishonorable" [şerefsiz], rather stronger in Turkish than its English translation. He does not forget how the employer once bribed the police to cover up a work accident, where a friend of Cengiz lost three fingers. He hates that management does not allow him to choose when he can use his annual leave. He has a clear vision of an ongoing struggle between the employer and the workers, a struggle in which he partakes. Because he is an experienced, hard-working worker, and because there have been recent cases of resistance in the factory, Cengiz is [maybe too] self-confident about his and his coworkers' agency. The only good thing about the factory is that management pays social security premiums according to actual wages, which in Cengiz's case means nearly twice the minimum wage plus overtime. Cengiz believes this is because of their agency: "He is scared of us, otherwise he wouldn't do that. Because we secretly made complaints to the ministry, he thinks we may do it again." A social man, he is sensitive to and aware of the stories, struggles, and working conditions of other workers around him.

He speaks confidently about his daily effort bargaining and struggle for informal control on the shop floor. Hodson underlines that effort bargaining is the most widespread form of resistance, and workers tended to be assertive "in demanding at least some control over the pace and content of their work."[17] Several times we talked about effort bargaining together with his coworkers, who although in less assertive and less articulate ways, claim that they try to do the same. Importantly, they admit that Cengiz is good at it, due to his dexterity and seniority. Cengiz explains:

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16   Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 181.

17   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 62 and 203.

Let's say they assign me a new machine. I check it out and find the easiest way to run it. I figure out how I can produce faster and create short breaks for myself. I can usually process the amount I am assigned to complete in one hour in forty-five minutes, and afterwards I hang around for ten or fifteen minutes. I drink tea, chat with people. If they annoy me, I work more slowly. Then the foreman comes and asks me what's wrong. I tell him, "I can't work harder because you did this and that, and I am demoralized." You should explain your problem politely; he is your superior, after all. I tell him, "my friend, if you push me, this is what happens. You should leave me alone; only then can you get what you want. You know that I can produce enough. You shouldn't make a fuss over my short breaks." You should act wisely. If you do, you won't be oppressed. Of course, for this you should know what you're doing. Then you can find the shortcuts and you won't have any difficulty. Then the management won't push you. … When the boss or the foreman is looking over my shoulder, I never work faster, I work normally. Night shifts are even better because there are fewer people around.

These efforts do not challenge the accumulation of surplus value, as Burawoy insistently argues.[18] However, he neglects[19] Fantasia's observation that serious and challenging forms of collective action can only be created "within the context of a preexisting pattern of active work-group social relationships."[20] Such mundane strategies and moderate confrontations are probably the only way

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18   Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism*.

19   In fact, Burawoy acknowledges that these kind of moderate, quotidian actions reveal "the empirical existence of a human potential for emancipation," and that workers have the capacity to "collectively control the labor process." However, it is unusual that he refers to the other side of the coin only in a passing comment in an endnote, while he insists throughout the whole book that these actions actually serve the interests of management and by no means challenge them. See ibid., 237.

20   Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*, 108.

"to create a collective identity separate from management and lay the ground-work for collective action."[21] Those who will actively join the ranks of an assertive collective action during a crisis or when called upon by labor leaders will mostly be practiced workers who have experience with moderate confrontation.

Indeed, Cengiz and his coworkers performed several collective actions, which while not necessarily successful, had a moderate impact on objective and subjective working conditions. The first serious action in which Cengiz participated was a unionization struggle in his previous workplace, in 1994. Cengiz was young, "ignorant," and not sure what was going on at first. Later, convinced by a friend, he became a member of the union and became more involved. They came close to winning the majority, but a worker informed the management. Many supporters were fired, and the action lost momentum. This experience facilitated Cengiz enthusiastic participation in an attempt at unionization in his current factory, in 2001. This time, however, they could obtain no more than 70 members, needing around 20 more to have a majority. They had difficulty convincing especially young workers, with whom there was a generation gap with respect to the leaders of the mobilization. Furthermore, most of the young workers perceived their joba as temporary, and the union was alien to them. In 2001 and through the 2010s, the management adopted a dual employment policy (a widespread post-Fordist strategy) where a core of experienced workers are surrounded with peripheral, mostly temporary, young workers with less job security. In 2010, the core workers numbered around 50, while younger and peripheral ones were around 150. This policy prevented worker solidarity from bridging the generation gap. Because the leaders of 2001 campaign did not want the mobilization to become public knowledge, they canceled the effort after four months when it became clear that the majority of workers would not be reached. In 2005 there was another, albeit dubious unionization attempt, which may have been a conscious effort

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21   Marc Dixon, Vincent J Roscigno, and Randy Hodson, "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," *Social Forces* 83, no. 1 (2004): 227.

by a couple of workers to be fired with greater severance payments.[22] Nevertheless, it annoyed management and kept them busy for a couple of months.

A more recent collective action in which they engaged was a complaint to Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) about employer malpractice. At the beginning of 2010, their employer had applied to the Short Employment Payment program, which was introduced by the government to support firms experiencing hard times due to the financial crisis. Management claimed that demand for its products had diminished and that it neither needed nor could bear the costs of employing workers full time. The government supported the firm by paying workers' wages for three months, but at nearly 20 percent lower than the normal amount. The firm had deceived the government: during that period workers worked full time and sometimes even overtime. Workers' social security premiums were being paid for only half of each month, because the firm was officially employing them part-time – fourteen days in the month. Some 31 workers, including Cengiz and Cengiz-the-young, filed a collective complaint. Though the workers did not get an official response from the agency, management organized a meeting to threaten the workers telling them that it was aware of the complaint and had identified the plaintiffs. They further claimed that they had managed to annul the complaint without paying a fine. There was much speculation about the actual impact on the firm, but the fact that management was annoyed was certain, and Cengiz enjoyed it. As a pious man who prays five-times a day, Cengiz believes that demanding justice is his religious duty: "If you don't stand up for your right, Allah will call you to account for."

Cengiz is sociable, easy-going, and a community man; as he always says, he loves to interact with people [*muhabbet*]. He is from Havza, the most crowded community in the neighborhood, and enjoys a large social network. He is a supporter of the AKP, but not partisan; he is a pious man but not an Islamist. Thus, he is sociable with almost everybody in the neighborhood, and

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22 This is a popular strategy among Turkish workers because open efforts to organize a union almost guarantee dismissal, which after a lawsuit lasting around a year and a half will generally bring a higher amount of severance pay. See Birelma, *Ekmek Ve Haysiyet Mücadelesi - Günümüz Türkiyesi'nde Üç İşç Hareketinin Etnografisi*, 217.

he hangs around in the coffeehouses, at the mosque and on the street. Combined with his sensitivity to workers' problems, this sociability makes him a keen observer of the daily struggles of workers. He believes that collective actions are rare for two reasons. First of all, people are overly afraid of being dismissed, mostly due to their credit card debts. Second, there are "rats," who inform to management, killing any possibility of collective action. Cengiz does not blame only workers, but underscores that management is the real agent, striving to turn people into "rats." Because of his sensibility and seniority, he has had the chance to witness that process many times. He also points to "fawners," a less evil but still unpleasant group that obstructs the emergence of collective actions.

Although he admits that collective actions are rare, he is optimistic about individual resistance. He gives many examples of friends or others he has heard about where the individual worker reacted by exploiting loopholes in the labor process, or through legal means such as filing complaints or opening a lawsuit, or even by violence against superiors. He knows by experience that there are some who simply cannot tolerate injustice, and he is grateful to them.[23]

For example, one day when we had settled into a deep conversation about these issues at a sidewalk teahouse, a relative of Cengiz passed by and joined our table. Without our prompting, in response to our, "how you doin'?'" the man began explaining that he was worried about a collective action with which his son recently became involved. His son had been working for six years in a garment factory that employed approximately 500 workers. The employer was about to move the factory to another building and decided to exploit the situation to force workers who wanted to keep their jobs to sign a document declaring that they had received all of their claims and compensations from the firm. The employer seemed to be planning to officially dismiss and then rehire the workers without paying severance, another common tactic of Turkish employers. Such signed documents are not actually legally binding but most workers do not know this, and employers skillfully manipulate them.

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23 In that sense Cengiz is more optimistic than Cihan and Fethi, probably because he is much more sociable, giving him a wider perspective. But he is also more minimalist at least compared to Cihan.

Once signed, these documents discourage workers from seeking their due in the future. Nearly 150 workers including his son had protested, declaring that they would not sign. His son was in fact one of the leaders of the resistance, and had become the object of his foreman's bullying. He recently became pissed off and head-butted the foreman. He had not been dismissed so far, probably because management assumed that such a move would create more tension in an already contentious situation. His father was more worried than proud. His son is the second breadwinner in a tenant family of five. He asked Cengiz's advice, and Cengiz replied that his son had done well: what the employer was tyring to do was so evil and unjust, and as a worker with six years seniority, his son had a significant amount of severance pay at stake. The man left no less worried than before, and Cengiz noted the coincidence of the topics of conversation. It was neither the first nor the last time I witnessed that kind of a story being told to Cengiz.

Cengiz is not a radical. He embraces neither an ideological radicalism like Cihan's, nor an emotional radicalism like Fethi's. He deliberately espouses a moderate, balanced form of criticism and activism, such that he seems to oscillate between resistance and compliance. During a conversation together with two of his coworkers, I asked him about it directly:

— Cengiz Abi, on the one hand you get really angry, on the other you are lenient.

— Cengiz: At some point that's how we have to be. See, you eat bread[24] from that factory. You get angry to the point where you shout and yell. However, at some point you return to the fact that you eat bread from there, after all.

When it comes to the details about his workplace, for example, he emphasizes that their social security premiums are fully paid:

This is the good thing about this dishonorable man's workplace. At some point you look at the environment. There are worse places. There are bad places and worse places. Ours is bad. However, there are many

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24   To eat bread from somewhere (*bir yerden ekmek yemek*) is an idiom in Turkish, which means that you make your living by working there.

that are worse. What will we do if we work in one of those worse places?

Up until 2004 when the father of his present boss was in charge, "things were much better, relations were much closer." Indeed, Cengiz mourns for the more paternalist, less bureaucratic form of management.

His oscillations are reinforced by the fact that as a senior, skillful worker, he makes nearly double minimum wage – relatively more than average for the factory. His skills and hard work are clearly recognized by the management. For instance, when management sent two foremen and three workers to Iran to assemble some exported products, he was one of the three workers taken along. As observed by Burawoy, seniority is a complicating factor, which on the one hand "generates greater commitment to the company (based on the rewards of seniority, such as pension and job security)"[25] and on the other hand increases the likelihood of a higher level of criticalness.

Cengiz's moderation is even more visible in interactions with more radical coworkers, such as Cengiz-the-young. As I mention before, Cengiz-the-young initially introduced me to Cengiz. The former is the older brother of Erkan, whom I present as an example of compliance. Unlike his brother Erkan, Cengiz-the-young is a young man with great resentment toward his employer. As with the examples of Mehmet and Adil, Cengiz-the-young and Erkan ex-emplify brothers with different attitudes toward class struggle. Cengiz-the-young has hearing loss and it is comparatively difficult to communicate with him even though he uses a hearing device. The degree of his handicap is suffi-cient that he is entitled to early retirement.[26] His resentment and desire to share his anger was powerful when I met him in 2010. It was exacerbated by problems in the factory due to the economic crisis. Although it subsided af-terwards, Cengiz-the-young is always angrier, more critical, and more asser-tive about his employer than Cengiz. In one of their interactions, Cengiz-the-

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25 Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism*, 91.

26 Cengiz can retire when he has accumulated 3600 days of paid premiums. Although there are many variances regarding the necessary number of days, it is generally 5000 or more for his generation.

young complained about a particular problem: the management used to provide small payments to fasting workers during Ramadans as a compensation for skipped lunches. However, in 2010, it did not. Cengiz responded:

> My brother, you should just ignore some problems. Being a boss is not easy. Being a worker is not easy, but being a boss is not easy, either. Yes, it would be good if we were paid this money. But you know, there are 300-400 thousand products waiting in the stock due to the crisis. The guy pays our wage on time. So there is no need to make an issue of 30 lira.

Cengiz's reply might sound reasonable, while Cengiz-the-young sounds like a penny pincher. But Cengiz-the-young was considering the compensation of 30 lira as an issue of dignity.

Cengiz is critical of Cengiz-the-young's path of resistance. The following comparative account reveals Cengiz's deliberate strategy for dealing with management:

> Cengiz [-the-young] loses out because he talks too much. He opposes everything. You have to assume a humble attitude. But Cengiz [-the-young] gets angry immediately. He has no patience, starts yelling right away. The management got used to his attitude. I tell him "don't yell." He explains: "that's my right, they should give me that." You can't gain anything by yelling. You should keep a low profile. Don't work fast, don't push yourself… it's no problem. But you should seem quiet, you should take it easy, and say "Ok boss." Once I had an argument with the foreman. We really jumped at each other, raised our voices and all that. Then I told myself "I am fighting with this man but *how far can I go, anyway?* What do I gain by this?" I regretted it. Actually, the foreman later apologized. But my point is that you have to speak politely. Getting angry is not really helpful.

Even though Cengiz occasionally breaks this rule he set for himself, he defends a make-do strategy and tries to avoid open conflict. He claims this strategy is more efficient than more contentious ones. There are justifiable reasons behind his choice of strategy. He probably does not want to pay the cost of open resistance (he has more to lose if he were to be dismissed, due to his seniority)

and his habitus holds him back from such a performance. By contrast, Cengiz-the-young is active and assertive in terms of defending his rights. Anger rather than strategic thinking guides him. His superiors seem to tolerate his aggressiveness in part due to his hearing loss, but this accommodation is not automatic: Cengiz-the-young seems to have won it through everyday struggle.

Another significant interaction between the two to was in a street encounter on the street. There I witnessed another of Cengiz's oscillations, as well as how he imposes his moderation on Cengiz-the-young. While the three of us were walking around, we encountered Cengiz's brother-in-law, who was unemployed and planning to apply to Cengiz's firm. The brother-in-law asked Cengiz whether he could give Cengiz's name as a reference in his application. Cengiz refused, saying that the employer did not want to hire people, who knew workers inside the firm, anymore. He explained the reason: "We united and stood up for our rights several times recently, so the guy is very cautious now." Cengiz-the-young intervened: "Yes, we did, but what happened afterwards? We didn't get anything; it all broke down." Cengiz replied: "Why do you say that? Do you have any complaints now? Is there a problem with the pay? No." Cengiz-the-young did not continue, either out of respect or because he knew it was hopeless to try to convince his older friend. Nevertheless, he expressed his disapproval with his facial expression. This time their clash was not due to their differing strategies, but because of Cengiz's minimalism and Cengiz-the-young's maximalism. Even though Cengiz underscored the significance and pride of collective action, within a few seconds he revealed his minimal thinking and imposed it on Cengiz-the-young. Cengiz-the-young, on the other hand, is a dreamer and wants more than the application of the ordinary rules of bargaining.

As Cengiz once admitted, he does not want to be recognized as "a source of trouble" (*çıban başı*) by management. I responded: "There is such a fear, isn't there?" He answered:

> It is not fear; you just don't want to be involved. I am speaking for myself, I think, when I say, "my bread is more or less ok; I shouldn't mess with." If you strive for it you can get what's your right, anyway, through the courts and all that.

Cengiz embraces an important yet moderate level of criticism and activism. He chooses deliberate boundaries that he tries not to cross. He carefully defends his autonomy in the labor process with generally non-contentious strategies, but enthusiastically participates in collective actions led by others. Cengiz reveals that to become assertive and lead a collective action requires more than just a rational calculation, which would invalidate open-resistance for many workers like him.

Cengiz retired from the factory in 2013 and worked for nearly a year in two other factories. His days in those factories were numbered; in 2014 he pursued the working class dream and became a petty entrepreneur. On account of moderate savings that only grew with the severance payment he received after retirement, and also due to his social network, he took over the operation of the teahouse at the neighborhood mosque, a moderate but stable business. Most importantly, his own business. He is still a deliberate defender of worker resistance. In one of my visits to his new workplace he said loudly so that others in the teahouse would hear and join in:

> People complain about their bosses. But they don't actually stand up for their rights. My friend has a low retirement wage because his boss paid his premiums at the minimum level. But what did I do [in that situation]? I made a complaint about it and about other things. This is what they are supposed to do, as well. But they fawned over their bosses. They did a favor for their bosses, not for themselves.

People around nodded in agreement and it was nice to hear such a oration in the mosque.

5.3.1 *Discussion*

Cengiz's case is appropriate for scrutinizing the principal dilemma of worker resistance: no matter how critical and resistant they become under the conditions of capitalism, workers in general need employers to survive. *This is the dilemma of dependency.* Except the marginal cases of worker cooperatives (which are absent in Turkey and anyway marginal in the world), the only way for workers to become independent from employers is to become an entrepreneur, which is to say, a potential employer themselves. *This is the vicious cycle*

of capitalism. Furthermore, in the current state of new capitalism typified by structural unemployment, declining public employment, and the erosion of the notion of the state's responsibility for employment, jobs have become more precious, while the dependency on entrepreneurs is growing both subjectively and objectively. As Cengiz says: at the end of the day, he eats bread from that factory; there are (almost) always worse places to work; to be a boss is not easy; and in a fight against the boss, *how far can one go anyway*?[27] Cengiz's seniority only amplifies general dependence into a greater one on the immediate employer. As workers become seniors in their workplaces, they acquire advantages that are later deemed as too valuable to risk.

This dependency is pervasive. Mehmet, a potential working-class hero, says: "Tayyip [the prime minister] supports the bosses; but if the bosses don't exist, how will workers find jobs?" Esengül, who was among the leaders of a collective action against her boss, was so relieved when she first heard the formulation: "Without bosses we cannot survive, but without us they cannot." This sentence encapsulates something Esengül wanted to articulate but could not, namely, the dependency of employers on workers. Its first part, however, is just another straightforward declaration of workers' dependency on employers. This might seem to suggest an interdependency between workers and entrepreneurs, but in a market society that grants value according to supply and demand, the value of workers in relation to entrepreneurs is destined to be lower, while their respective dependency on entrepreneurs remains higher.

Cihan, a radical, admits that to be an entrepreneur (i.e., an employer) is not easy. He seriously considers opportunities to start a business with a friend and be rid of wage labor, but so far he has not ventured out. As if sharing a painful secret, he once admitted that when examined carefully, being an entrepreneur has its own hardships not perceived from the outside. He realized that workers actually enjoy an unexpected privilege, namely peace of mind,

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27 As with the vast majority, Cengiz does not possess an imagination of alternative modes of production. In this sense, his "how far can I go?" question is legitimate. While I do not have much political sympathy for the USSR, I believe its mere existence as an actually existing alternative to a mode of production that renders workers categorically dependent on employers to survive has had an important impact on the subjectivities of the workers (and others) of the world. This is especially true in the countries of Global South where liberalism has not delivered its promises of political freedom and affluence.

because they enjoy a fixed income and do not bother with the many problems of running a firm. Cihan actually presented this as a weakness among workers, himself included, just another reason why employers' dominate them. Cihan's words may be exaggerated, but he has a point: under capitalism, workers are indeed dependent to a certain extent on the entrepreneurship of entrepreneurs. This painful realization by Cihan lies behind Cengiz's and many others' oscillations between resistance and compliance. It is not just manipulation by hegemony.

These oscillations are reminiscent of terms like "contradictory" or "dual"[28] consciousness. Gramsci explains that a worker might have two theoretical consciousnesses: one implicit in his activity, and another "superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed."[29] While these terms are useful for revealing the contradictory dynamism and authenticity of workers' consciousness, they somehow conceal the fact that reality itself is also contradictory and dual. As Hyman emphasizes, most orthodox literature on employment relations "ignores or marginalizes the conflict between capital and labour, most Marxist literature perceives nothing else."[30] However, "the capitalist labour process is at one and the same time a co-operative and a conflictual activity."[31] Similarly, as Watson formulates, "each side to the employment relationship depends on the other while also having divergent wants," which means "conflict is intertwined with co-operation."[32]

In their article on the genealogy of dependency, Fraser and Gordon capture the change in the discourse on the dependency of working class on the bourgeoisie since the nineteenth century:

> When white workingmen demanded civil and electoral rights, they claimed to be independent. This entailed reinterpreting the meaning

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28 Mann, *Consciousness and Action among the Western Working Class*, 46.

29 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: International Publishers, 1992), 333.

30 Hyman, "Strategy or Structure? Capital, Labour and Control," 34.

31 Ibid., 35.

32 Watson, *Sociology, Work and Industry*, 210.

of wage labor so as to divest it of the association with dependency. That in turn required a shift in focus-from the experience or means of labor … to its remuneration and how that was spent. Radical workingmen, who had earlier rejected wage labor as "wage slavery," claimed a new form of manly independence within it.[33]

They conclude this issue as follows:

> In this new industrial semantics, white workingmen appeared to be economically independent, but their independence was largely illusory and ideological. … [T]he language of wage labor in capitalism denied workers' dependence on their employers, thereby veiling their status as subordinates in a unit headed by someone else.[34]

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, "in practice capital must surrender the means of production to the 'control' of the workers for their actual use in the production process."[35] This gives labor its everyday basis for resistance, because "even the smallest degree of subjectivity and detailed control of the direction of the process by labour can be used as a weapon against capital in the workplace and is so used."[36] This unavoidable dependency of capital on labor is where labor's unbreakable power to resist lies. However, it incurs a price to the workers, as emphasized by Cressey and MacInnes,

> … since labour can only gain access to the means of production through selling its labour-power to capital it has an interest in the maintenance of that relationship and therefore the viability of the unit of capital which employs it.[37]

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33 Fraser and Gordon, "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the Us Welfare State," 315.

34 Ibid., 319.

35 Cressey and MacInnes, "Voting for Ford: Industrial Democracy and the Control of Labour," 14.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 15.

This is the "deep tension" within working class struggles, as Wright calls it,[38] drawing on Przeworski.[39] Under capitalism, Przeworski (1985, 178) emphasizes,

> … profit is the necessary condition for the improvement of material conditions of any group in the society. Unless capitalists appropriate profits, the capital stock becomes depleted, production falls, and employment and consumption fall with it.[40]

Wright develops on and develops the argument: under capitalism, workers' ability to resist exploitation advances their present welfare, but their future welfare depends on capitalists' present investment of the surplus they appropriate. The latter and the former are obviously in conflict, which generates a tension within working-class struggles, as "workers face a potential tradeoff between present and future income in their struggles with capitalists."[41] This tension also operates on the micro level in small and medium size firms, where workers' demands for better conditions can actually endanger the firm's survival.

This dependency is not merely about material survival or the enjoyment of the material fortunes of capitalist modernity, but also about intrinsic meanings that work involves, as discussed in the second chapter. We are not only dependent on bourgeoisie for our material well-being, but also for our access to work, which is so crucial for social and psychological life. I believe this dilemma of dependency therefore is the principal dilemma of working class struggle.

As I examine in the second chapter, the existence of upward mobility – of people who have risen from among the ranks of the working class into the bourgeoisie –further reinforces this dependency, both objectively and subjec-

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38   Erik Olin Wright, "Class Struggle and Class Compromise," (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Madison, 2011).

39   Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

40   Ibid., 178.

41   Wright, "Class Struggle and Class Compromise," 2.

tively. The existence of a few (but enough) cases of success reinforces employers' entitlement to the "badge of ability."[42] Sennett and Cobb examine this process, which awards the upper class a badge of ability and relegates the lower classes to self-accusation. However, they focus only on the professional class as the upper one and on education as the means of upward mobility. My research suggests that this process fits even better to employers and entrepreneurism, which are ignored by Sennett and Cobb.

Burawoy, after years of research on workers' experience in production and its exploitative nature, questions his own assumptions:

> As I look back on 40 years of studying labor …, I ask whether the experience of the market has not been more profound than the experience in production.[43]

Like a swing of the pendulum in the other direction, he concludes that wage labor has become "a shrinking labor aristocracy"[44] and "the experience of exploitation through wage labor is becoming ever more a privilege rather than a curse."[45]

I argue that the experience of wage labor has always been a privilege at a certain level, in contrast with the overfocusing of critical thought on its exploitative and oppressive features due to understandable political reasons. This is because selling labor-power to capital also signifies access to the means of production, as Cressey and MacInnes reminds us. Under capitalism the means of production are not strictly appropriated by an impermeable group, but some fall down while others can climb up. This setting endows employers with independence and creativity. Workers, on the other hand – who gain access to the means of production only through being hired as wage labor – experience and *become accustomed* to dependency.

The experience of the market has always been as profound as the experience in production, because the market almost automatically handles its own

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42   Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class.*

43   Michael Burawoy, "On Uncompromising Pessimism: Response to My Critics," *Global Labour Journal* 2, no. 1 (2011): 75.

44   "From Polanyi to Pollyanna: The False Optimism of Global Labor Studies," 306.

45   "On Uncompromising Pessimism: Response to My Critics," 75.

legitimization, delivering what it promises though to a limited degree: opportunities for upward mobility via entrepreneurship or education, on the background of a growing economy. For the sake of a higher level of abstraction, radical critique ignores the interconnected facts those who really create jobs are entrepreneurs, and there is always a certain current of upward mobility – a trickle of people becoming entrepreneurs. However, there is a price for ignoring this on the daily life, such that the evidence renders this radical criticism too abstract and irrelevant for most workers.

§ 5.4   Craftsman's Dilemma

Sinan, a craftsman, lost his father at the age of fourteen. Five months later he began working in the Şişecam glass factory, a large, unionized factory of a semi-public firm in his hometown of Sinop. When he was seventeen, a strike in the factory led to a pyrrhic victory. The firm decided to downsize and close the factory, which had been built in Sinop in 1981 to take advantage of lower labor costs. His first experience of collective action did not leave a positive impression. Workers at the factory, including himself, believed that had they not gone on strike, the firm's factory in Beykoz, Istanbul, would have closed rather than their own. Sinan faced the decisive power of capital, which is to exit, even though the workers had mobilized, were relatively strong, and had developed a strong union. He deeply wishes that he never had to come to Istanbul, which he did due to the closure.

Sinan has become a craftsman, which gives him both more power and criticalness compared to workers in general. Not inclined to talk about work, he is at first sight a man of joy, fun, and leisure, as I mention before. He recalls Willis' English male workers, who value masculinity, toughness, and humor.[46] However, if the issue comes up, he reveals the sharp criticism of an experienced craftsman:

> Bosses always try to take credit for everything; they try to get as much as possible from workers. That's the way it is. As a worker you always have to be careful. We have to work, but we shouldn't produce too

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46   Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, 30, 52, and 100.

much. If you do, the boss will want that quantity both from you and from everyone else. You should only produce as much as you have to, not more. For example, the boss introduced a piece-rate system in my previous workplace. He gave us good money at first, and we pushed ourselves. We worked hard and greatly increased the production. Then what happened? Bang! The guy cancelled the piece-rate system, returned to regular system, and our wages decreased. That's the way bosses are.

As known, restricting output is like one of the ten commandments for craftsmen, one that Sinan raised along with deep suspicion about employers in general. When we met, he was working in a unionized glass factory run by a German firm, and he supplied me with several stories about how he and some of his coworkers were non-compliant. His foreman was less skilled than himself, he claimed, and Sinan had the confidence to reject his foreman's unreasonable orders, saying: "We can switch spots. You can take my place and try to do what you are ordering. It's fine for me to do your part. You wouldn't be able to do mine anyway." The foreman could not insist, and mostly left them alone. "I don't pull any punches; I never fawn" is how Sinan explains his daily performance of class struggle on the shop floor.

Collective action was also a part of Sinan's repertoire. The most interesting case was in his next factory where he began working together with twentyfive of his coworkers from the German firm after it unexpectedly closed. It was a smaller factory employing some sixty workers, and the workday was nine hours. Sinan and his coworkers had worked in the unionized factory for eight hours a day, and the one additional hour was unbearable for them. In the second month of their employment they won the support of some other workers and told the employer that they would work only eight hours a day or quit all together. The employer could do nothing, and they got what they had asked for. "He cannot find workers like us," was the way Sinan explained the situation, implying that the power they enjoyed was thanks to their craft and their unity. But it seemed the employer became resentful: four months later almost all of the workers who had come from his previous factory were dismissed following a major production flaw. Sinan insisted it was the fault of the production manager, but his coworkers became scapegoats. Later on, he bought a

minibus and tried for two years to work as a self-employed driver, but the enterprise did not last, and he went back to work in a factory.

He is actually a resistant worker, so why Sinan does not talk about these issues in his daily interactions? Why does it seem like he does not care, like he is compliant? Even his interest in talking politics is low compared to other men of İkitelli. First of all, in terms of his job, he is in the upper echelons of the manual working class, which factored into his gamble to be rid of wage work and become a petty entrepreneur. The fact that he "saved himself," as one of our poorer neighbors put it, eases his tensions about work, so that issues of work sink down to the bottom of his topics of conversation. Secondly, as a man inclined to joy, fun, and leisure – who likes to play cards, drink alcohol, eat, make jokes, and flirt – he embraces a sarcastic cynicism about class structure, despite the fact he is well- aware and critical of it on the shop floor level. The two factors are interconnected. If he were not relatively better off, he may have been more depressed or angry rather than sarcastic (consider Fethi, below, for example) may have been to busy working long hours instead of enjoying a relatively longer leisure time.

In one of our one-to-one conversations, we began talking politics. Inevitably, we came to the Kurdish issue and I revealed my support for the Kurdish movement. I was expecting Sinan to react; because I knew that he voted for the nationalist MHP, at least in the last election. He reacted, however, in an unexpected way. He agreed with that Kurds have oppressed by the state and had the right to do something about it, but was critical of the Kurdish movement from a class perspective, claiming that they would not be happy in the end because rich Kurds would oppress poor Kurds. This argument might have been a cover for his nationalist sentiment; however, it was nevertheless a specific and marginal argument in the Turkish context, only used among socialists. I asked about his solution to the contradiction between the poor and the rich. He answered that no matter whether Kurdish or Turkish, the "working segment," the "low-incomers" should act together to do something about the problem. He revealed a profound resentment against the rich in general, putting forth clear boundaries between us and them. However, he was also very abstract. I asked him if he really believed Turkish workers gave any hope to Kurdish ones in order to convince them to abandon their alliance with Kurdish rich and work toward a more equitable country together with the Turkish

working segment. He stopped, thought, and answered that I might have a point. Moving beyond the Kurdish question and addressing class directly, I asked him how exactly he thought workers could unite, struggle, and make a better country. He mentioned about that unions were weak and political parties were not promising. He concluded that he did not actually know: "I know this should be the way, but how? That's over my head. Fuck it!" He was serious, sincere, and also depressed.

5.4.1   *Discussion*

As noted by Hodson,[47] craft workers show "the highest levels of resistance to managerial authority" and "exhibit the highest levels of group solidarity" when compared to less skilled or professional workers.[48] Craft occupations were not expelled by capitalism, contrary to the expectations of many observers. They constitute "about 10 percent of the labor force in advanced industrial economies" in a stable way over the last century.[49] As an experienced craftsman working in a craft setting such as glass production, Sinan has become critical and ardent about class relations. He participated in many struggles on the shop floor, won some, lost others. He experienced just how far a workers' mobilization can reach, and how difficult it is to proceed further. He thought the issue through all the way down to the necessity and possibility of a political working class movement. As a man whose secularism buffers him from the influence of AKP hegemony, he keeps his distance from and sarcasm about the establishment even during the era of the passive revolution.[50]

The topic that "goes over Sinan's head," is over the heads of many others', including myself. It is indeed a difficult question. Self-confident, theoretical answers seem promising on paper; however, drawing on actual practice in Turkey and other places around the globe, it is difficult to provide a practical, convincing answer. Sinan is already in the upper echelons of the manual working class on account of his craft, which gives him a relative power finding a job, bargaining and defending once he is in the door. As a craftsman, he stands

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47   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 157.

48   Ibid., 222.

49   Ibid., 142.

50   Tugal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism*.

on an edge: he is already relatively powerful on the shop floor; to become more powerful and further his rights, he has to go outside of the shop floor. He has to become involved in broader working-class mobilizations via civil society, unions, or politics. However, these fronts of class struggle have been relatively destitute in contemporary Turkey. Moreover, they require specific activism, which implies getting in touch with people beyond the workplace and sacrificing leisure time. This is Sinan's dilemma. Beyond being a feature of his character, his sarcastic cynicism about class struggle is grounded in this context, his daily activism in the shop floor nothwithstanding. Instead of getting depressed while walking the difficult road of collective social struggle, he seems concern himself with it. As a man already at the upper echelon of the manual working class and faced with the difficulty of furthering his rights, he turned toward self-employment at the first opportunity. He could take this risk not only due to his craftman's self-confidence, but also because of the relatively higher demand for his wage labor – crucial for surviving a potential bankruptcy, as would indeed be the case.

§ 5.5 The Dilemma of Coworkers

Fethi, a hard worker, is among the most critical workers I met in İkitelli. He was my first landlord and my next door neighbor. Thanks to kindness of him and his wife, Güldane, I spent a lot of time with them. Even the day we first met, when as a potential tenant I asked about his work, he criticized his employer's cruelty and his coworkers' faint-heartedness. His criticalness is reinforced by the fact that he lost his left hand in a work accident in that same workshop back in 1978. Such an effect is neither automatic nor natural; he might well have become passive due to his handicap, which could have cause problems of self-esteem and insecurity about employment. Most workers, even critical ones, feel dependence on their employers to an extent as a reflection of their actual structural dependence (explained in the previous discussion). Fethi feels this in a more pronounced way, because he believes that he has a low chance of finding another job due to his handicap. Nonetheless, these factors did not stop him from embracing a critical stance towards his boss and bosses in general, which in turn led him to be relatively more resistant.

Fethi is well known among the older residents of the neighborhood, where he has lived since 1979. He is kind, friendly, and reliable. I was greeted with positive reactions from everyone I told that I was his tenant. Former tenants, Lütfü and Şükrüye, who live in the apartment below mine, are grateful to him. He was always helpful and sold them the apartment for a fair price. The *muhtar*, Naim, with his ambition and wealth, represented the opposite values as Fethi. But even he told me that Fethi was one of the most reliable person he ever had met and that he was sorry, that they had lost contact. Fethi's son's wedding was more crowded than to many others I have attended in the neighborhood.

Until the 2000s, Fethi was a leftist, admirer of Deniz Baykal, who was the leader of the CHP in 1990s. He was also a secular man who frequently drank alcohol and spent most of his leisure time out with his friends. As he explains it, the fear he felt during the earthquake of 1999 made him a pious man, praying five times a day. He even joined a *tarikat* for some two years in the mid-2000s. In time, he became a strong supporter of the AKP, and only occasionally criticizes the government for being so pro-employer. Fethi's story is telling in terms of the cultural and political transformations Turkey has been undergoing in the last two decades. I met many middle-aged men who experienced similar transformations, though not necessarily as sharp as Fethi's.

"He has been on my shoulders for 30 years" is how he preceives his "evil" employer. His employer has gradually abolished all fringe benefits and embraced a strict minimum wage policy, all the while increasing the pace of production. He became "even more stingier" as the bus'ness grew larger and he grew richer, according to Fethi, such that he has a hard time finding new workers due to his bad reputation in the surrounding areas. While he hesitates to give one additional "cent" to his workers, he bought himself new cars and a summerhouse for 1.5 million liras. This is "a great injustice," because Fethi has to calculate his own income down to "3 cents" to get by. The managers are also "evil." Thos, who are even "a little good to the workers" do not stay for long, because the employer wants them to be hard. Some lower level administrative staff – those who are "adulatory" – are no less "evil."

Fethi does not hesitate to voice his resentment and to resist, although in more moderate ways than he wishes. He participated in two unsuccessful unionization attempts, in 1979 and 1992. As an inexperienced, young man in

1979, he mostly followed the lead of his older coworkers, but in 1992, he was one of the leaders. The latter mobilization was crushed by the employer when a worker "sold out to the boss" and two workers were fired. His employer used to say "all [workers' resistance] problems are somehow related to you. I don't like the way you think, but I like the way you work." Since the beginning of the 2000s, he abandoned his hope of mobilizing a collective resistance. Nowadays his employer teases him, saying: "You used to be a terrorist, but you have changed." As Fethi explains it: "He used to hate me. I struggled a lot, but couldn't achieve anything. Unfortunately, there are many dishonorable people, also among workers."

"We cannot unite" is the reason he supplies for not being able to transform working conditions. He suffers deeply and is resentful about it. With regard to his coworkers, he says: "People don't demand anything. They are silent. The boss sees this. He thinks 'they work, even if I don't give anything.' So he doesn't give anything more. Why would he?" Here Fethi holds a relatively newly hired young worker up as an example:

> I asked him whether he is content. He said yes. He makes minimum wage, but he is content. Then he grovels to the manager to be assigned overtime. What can I do with a guy like that?

He believes that his coworkers are mostly "dupes," "naifs," "rats," or "adulators," and tells them that he will not be their vanguard anymore, but will support them if they begin something themselves. He thinks that "rats" are the most harmful and that they are not few. He tells stories about how the superiors, including the employer himself, approach workers to convince them to turn.

Despite he slowing down, he has not surrendered. He voices his dissent together with a close friend whenever he is really bothered. For example, when the manager recently tried to introduce a change to speed up the pace of work, they spoke to the manager: "Don't push us any further!" In another case they spoke directly to the employer when his "equally evil" daughter threatened them. She was translating what they were saying for inspectors of the foreign companies to which the firm supplies.

Fethi's criticism is not limited to his own employer. Indeed, he repeats sayings like: "The order is the bosses' order. The wheel turns for them. Everything

goes well for them. It's the workers who suffer." His resentment extends to the rich, who are more or less the same people in his eyes:

> This is a great injustice. Right now [a Saturday night] along the Bosporus the rich are throwing money around. On the other hand, look at our situation. However, they will not take that money with them to the afterlife. Could Sabancı take anything with him?

He relates things like this not only to me, but also to family and friends, as I witnessed on numerous occasions. He was among few AKP voters who sympathized with the Tekel workers' resistance in 2010. There is probably a suppressed radical within him. Once we were walking and discussing what is to be done, and he unexpectedly said: "If the PKK were honest (*delikanlı*), they would kill the rich man (*godaman*). Then maybe we would have some sympathy. But they only kill soldiers, children of the poor." This was not an issue Fethi easily raised in daily life; it was to be shared only with someone who would not react. Despite moments of radicalism, his devotion to the AKP conditions him to be tolerant towards newly emerged entrepreneurs associated to the governing party.

Because his resentment is so powerful, Fethi is vocally critical. In the previous chapter I discuss how Adil raises his kids to be as grateful to employers as he is himself. Similarly, Fethi transfers his criticism to his sons. His youngest was a high school student when I met him, but his older son, Fatih, a detached survivor, is a factory worker. As a man of a new era and generation, Fatih has notable ambitions for entrepreneurism and upward mobility, a weaker identification with being a worker, and a weaker moral code of generosity and communal solidarity than his father. He is not pious, but a *lad* in the sense identifying as a member of the male, working-class group, who grew up together in the street and in school prizing masculinity, toughness, and humor.[51] Combination of this self-confident, masculine subjectivity and the criticism he

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51   Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, 52. But Fatih is not a *lad* in the sense that he does not value manual labor over non-manual, an attitude Willis observed among English, working-class, male youth in the 1970s. Such an attitude is not common among young males in İkitelli, nor anywhere else in Turkey, in my estimation.

learned from his father, Fatih embreces a more critical and resistant subjectivity than average workers of his generation.

Fatih is estranged from his current "dishonorable" employers, who "claim to be pious," but "don't give workers what they deserve." Fatih asserts that they "cut the wages of workers" and deceitfully make religious donations with them. His critical stance also involves action. In his previous job in a different, large textile factory, he ran into a common problem related to overtime. Overtime payments were made informally, not recorded on the payrolls, such that the employere keeps down the premiums for severance pay and retirement. This practice is common, and workers more or less accept it as natural. In 2005, however, Fatih and two coworkers went downtown to the office of the Ministry of Labor to file a grievance and later tried convince other workers to file similar grievances. In his present factory he resists his foreman when possible, an attitude partially supported by the fact that his foreman his same age. Fatih proudly gives examples of how he stands up against his foreman. For instance, on a night shift, the foreman left a note demanding they clean his table. Fatih prevented his friends from doing it, and he left a note for the foreman reading he should clean his own table. He also cites cases where he has encouraged and advised other workers to stand up for issues at stake.

It is interesting to see that Fatih's new wife, Hanife, who was actually our upstairs neighbor, voices criticism of her employer in a similarly vocal way during evening talks with the whole family. When Fethi criticizes his employer, Hanife – who works in a garment factory – usually follows as such:

> I don't like my boss either. He is a liar. I never believe what he says. He always tells us that the business is not doing well, but he keeps changing his car, always a top model. We tell one another that he burns up our pay raises on the highway.

A cheerful woman, she laughs: "Our boss is always abroad. He only shows up just before the time for pay raises to convince us to accept less." When Güldane, Fethi's wife, proudly says, "Fethi always stands up for his right," Hanife adds: "I am also like that." However, she does give concrete examples and seems to mean gossip and making fun of the contradictions of management – both of which might be considered minor forms of resistance. She admits that she did not tell the inspectors from H&M, the global company for which her

factory produces, the problems they had. She did not trust them and was afraid of being overheard. In contrast with the men's semi-heroic talk, Hanife's moderation might be related to gender. I observed that among those who value resistance, men tend to mention cases of standing up – they emphasize their agency – while women tend to be sincerer and more moderate in representing their agency.

The extent of criticism that Fatih and Hanife embrace is more moderate than Fethi's; however, it is remarkable and open to further development. But what about Fethi, whose story as a worker is about to end, as he will soon retire? Why could Fethi not resist more effectively? Why did he give up his struggle to mobilize his coworkers? He first underscores, the compliance of his coworkers, and second that as a disabled man, he would have greater of finding another job if he were dismissed. These make sense; nonetheless, his low level of activism certainly does not correspond to the level of his criticism.

Fethi struggled relatively hard in his workplace to mobilize his coworkers; however, he confined his efforts and vision to his particular workshop. He gave, lost, and more-or-less surrendered his proto-revolutionary class struggle in the very same workplace. Except for the unionization attempt in 1992, he seems to have never searched for or had contact with an institution or person who might have expanded his vision, provided him with ideas, and helped him develop the craft of organizing. Despite his powerful class resentment, Fethi chose at some point to give up and stick with the discourse of self-denial and sacrifice for his family. The "secret self-accusation implanted" in him, as Sennett and Cobb[52] would describe it – or "schemes of perception and dispositions … in other words, beliefs" durably inscribed in his body, as Bourdieu[53] names – have limited his vision and self-confidence so that he could not do justice to his great criticism and to the fire in his belly. As I show though, Fethi, like many others, did not come to embrace this subjectivity without a fight.

5.5.1   *Discussion*

During our numerous talks on the issue, "we cannot unite" was the main reason Fethi gave for the weakness of workers' resistance. The dilemma of

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52   Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, 256.

53   Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 170.

coworkers was the major reason for his inability to advance his own resistance, as other recalcitrant workers would also express.

As I mention in the previous chapter with respect to blaming others, collective resistance requires high levels of trust, but trust relations among coworkers are weak in general. There are important exceptions, like Sinan's position as a craftsman, Mehmet's trust for his coworkers in the gum factory, the story I tell in the next chapter, and accounts of mundane forms of solidarity, which do not concern opposition to management. Good relations can be built among coworkers againset all odds mostly due to the work of social leaders, whether they have the intention of building a base for collective resistance or not. Any collective resistance is deeply rooted in and must be founded on the social relations among workers on the shop floor. On the other hand, the testimonies and actions of workers in İkitelli reveal that trust is low among coworkers these days.

Nafız is a hard worker, and was one of the leaders of the mobilization in the gum factory. He explains the failure of their mobilization:

> No one trusts each other. Especially when money is at stake. This is not only in the workplace, but also in the *hemseri* associations, whereever people come together. People backbite each other all the time. People don't trust each other. Trust is very crucial.

Ercan, a modest, compliant worker, clarifyies why workers cannot stand up for themselves:

> Let's say there are ten people from the same workplace and we sit at a table and talk. We should do this, let's do this, we'll do that, etc. Everyone speaks, but they have other thoughts crossing their minds. One guy thinks: "If we do this to the boss, will he fire me?" The other guy thinks: "I will inform the boss about this. Will these guys beat me for that? They will know when they are all fired except for me." While they thump their chests, these things are what they are actually thinking. This is why workers don't support each other, why we can't stand up for ourselves against the boss. We unite at the table, but not in front of the boss. Mistrust.

Mustafa, the security guard, is cynical about workers' agency and summarizes his philosophy on the impossibility of collective resistance with a proverb: "Don't tell your thoughts to your friend, because he will tell them to his friend, and they fill your skin with chaff."[54] And he concludes: "You should not know too much. If you do, you should keep it to yourself." Mustafa enjoys repeating this proverb. The first time I heard it was when his wife explained me the short employment of her brother at Mustafa's workplace. Only five months after he started, her brother was fired after he talked to coworkers about unionizing.

Cihan's comrade Bülent explains the structural reasons for mistrust:

> The DİSK union [Birleşik Metal İş] can organize in workplaces where workers get more or less similar wages. However, the situation is different in places where wages are graded, because in these workplaces workers can sell out coworkers for small amount of money. Bosses, who build a hierarchical wage structure, are less vulnerable to unions. Unions can't organize their workplaces.

Indeed, "the guy has built a system that no one trusts one another" is an oft head phrase from workers, especially from those who want or try to organize in large firms. However, the mistrust among workers is never simply the result of employer conspiracy. There are even extreme cases where employers taunt workers because of their own two-faced behavior toward one another. Ali, a leftist, Alevi worker, complains about the coworker relations in his leather clothing workshop and explains the shock when his boss lectured twelve workers of the workshop:

> Relations are not good in the workshop. Our boss is a weird man. Once he told us: "When you leave the workshop, you act like you're friends. You hang out together, play cards and all that. But you watch for opportunities to hurt each other, to cook each other's goose. You are two-

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54   The Turkish proverb he uses is: "Sözün söyleme dostuna, o söyler dostuna, saman teperler postuna." "To fill the skin with chaff" means figuratively that the person was killed and his skin is to be filled with chaff for exhibition just like a wild animal.

faced. You are in need of each other, but you take pride in acting out against one another." I felt so much respect for him when he said that.

Ali's boss might be a virtuous man, or he might just be annoyed by the extreme individualism among his workers that undermines the basic level of cooperation between employees that "management invariably requires to meet performance targets."[55]

Complaining about coworkers sometimes sounds like bragging or like an apology for personal compliance and inactivity, as in the cases of Mustafa and maybe Nafız. Occasionally, in the moments following a discussion, one realizes that while ostensibly blaming others, the speaker is actually talking about himself or about habits he also possesses, as was the case with Ercan. It makes one wonder if this mistrust is self-fulfilling prophecy. However, it is obvious that this is an effect of the structural weakness of labor in relation to capital: to defend and further their rights, workers have to act collectively in numbers. Furthermore, even a few workers who are spying can undermine a large mobilization of hundreds, which requires a high level of secrecy in the development period. These defeats mostly lead workers to conclude that "you cannot trust anyone," though actual spies are just a handful of people. Usually the actual spies are never outed and the cloud of suspicion grows rapidly to include many if not most coworkers.

Workers have no natural tendency to unite against management; rather they "fight with each other at least as much as they fight with management."[56] As Hodson shows, competitiveness compels workers to fight with each other over issues of autonomy, avoiding work by shifting it to other coworkers, of unfairness of rewards. He also finds that coworker conflict statistically increases in the workplaces where mismanagement and/or abuse by management are more prevalent, concluding that "cultures of disrespect and disorganization initiated by management disrupt the entire workplace, including

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55   Noon and Blyton, *The Realities of Work*, 240.

56   Randy Hodson, "The Dignity of Research," *Contemporary Sociology* 33, no. 1 (2004).

relations between coworkers."[57] He reveals that rather than resisting incompetent management, workers often attack each other, because "coworkers are more proximate, and perhaps safer, targets" than management.[58]

On top of such long-standing structural weaknesses, structural changes arising from new capitalism have further diminished informal trust among workers.[59] Capital has always embraced "a deliberate strategy of divide and rule," which at least partially explains the existence of labor market fragmentation.[60] New capitalism has not only rendered the individual worker flexible, insecure, and therefore weaker in the face of capital, but also "fissured" the workplace – and therefore the workforce – through subcontracting and outsourcing.[61] The fall of the labor movement has been attributed to globalization and the "race to the bottom." Contrary, some labor scholars recently began arguing that globalization is not the main reason; the fall actually began before globalization and was experienced as severely in sectors, which are impossible to globalize.[62] The divide and rule strategy – accomplished by fissuring the workplace – has played a key role in breaking once strong labor power and keeping it at a low level.

To make matters worse, the fact that Turkey is an extremely low trust society does little to alleviate the coworkers' dilemma of Turkish workers.

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57   *Dignity at Work*, 209-17.

58   "The Dignity of Research," 19. Hodson shows a correlation between abuse by management and coworker conflict. However, he assumes abusive management is the independent variable. I suggest the relation should be considered interactive. Perhaps because workers in those workplaces did not defend one another, management became abusive to a greater degree. In workplaces with high worker solidarity, there must be a limit to management's ability to act abusively.

59   Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, 63.

60   Hyman, "Strategy or Structure? Capital, Labour and Control," 38.

61   David Weil, *The Fissured Workplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

62   Ruth Milkman, "Back to the Future? Us Labour in the New Gilded Age," *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 51, no. 4 (2013): 649; Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870*.

Among sixty countries surveyed by the World Values Survey with data on interpersonal trust, Turkey scored the third lowest,[63] and among twenty five European countries surveyed by the European Social Survey, it scored the lowest.[64] In an early anthropology of a working-class neighborhood Dubetsky points to "the sociological significance of trustworthiness in Turkish society" due to its scarcity.[65] He underlines that residents of the neighborhood are "continually distressed by the lack of trust prevalent in the city" and therefore overemploy kinship and *hemseri* networks to overcome the subjective problem.[66]

Nevertheless, local cultural or historical impacts only amplify a problem that is already present. Under the conditions of capitalism, workers have many reasons to mistrust one another, especially in the case of a cooperation involving risk, such as collective resistance. If they ever emerge, cohesion, trust, and solidarity must be built and actively maintained against all odds with a special emotional and social labor.

To comprehend the problem at stake, it is necessary to step back from the specific cooperative task – namely building a collective action of workers against an injustice at the workplace – to define the problem more broadly as a version of the general problem of human cooperation. Cooperation is not easy, always demanding, and always fragile. It is "a thorny process, full of difficulty and ambiguity and often leading to destructive consequences."[67] As Deutsch articulates, cooperation

> … induces and is induced by perceived similarity in beliefs and attitudes, readiness to be helpful, openness in communication, trusting

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63 Jan Delhey and Kenneth Newton, "Predicting Cross-National Levels of Social Trust: Global Pattern or Nordic Exceptionalism?," *European Sociological Review* 21, no. 4 (2005).

64 Yılmaz Esmer, "Islam, Gender, Democracy and Values: The Case of Turkey," in *Changing Values, Persisting Cultures - Case Studies in Value Change*, ed. Thorleif Pettersson and Yilmaz Esmer (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 295.

65 Alan Dubetsky, "Kinship, Primordial Ties, and Factory Organization in Turkey: An Anthropological View," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, no. 03 (1976).

66 Ibid.

67 Richard Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation* (London: Yale University Press, 2012), x.

and friendly attitudes, sensitivity to common interests and deemphasis of opposed interests, orientation toward enhancing mutual power rather than power differences.[68]

Communication accidents, misunderstandings, caprices, egos, emotions, competition for power and for recognition, calculation of individual interests, and problems of collective decision making abound in every human collectivity, which can render the emergence of cooperation even impossible or its maintenance extremely fragile. This is not only about workers. Business partnerships end for merely subjective reasons, even when the partnership benefits both parties. Close friendships can dissolve without reason, which makes sense to the third parties. Even siblings can experience the same downfall.

As an experienced activist and observer of numerous groups, I know that activists in political and worker groups – be they socialist, Islamist, LGBT, subcontracted workers' associations or unionizing/unionized workplace communities – have to spend lots of time and labor solving the so-called "personal problems," namely the conflicts among members that make not much sense to third parties. It is a completely different task than the raison d'etre of the group, devoid of the meaning and excitement that the "real" tasks involve for the motivated activists. This labor is indeed, tiresome, alienating, consuming, and mostly invisible. And because it is mostly invisible, social scientist do not adequately recognize the need for it. There is nothing "natural" or "spontaneous" about workers' cooperation to resist the powerful – in the sense that natural or spontaneous imply *without considerable labor or agency*. The obstacles to cooperation, which vary according to culture, historical period, and workplace have always been and will always be present. They have to be overcome with ongoing labor, agency, and specific but rare social and emotional skills.

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68   Morton Deutsch, "Cooperation and Competition," in *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, ed. Morton Deutsch and Peter T. Coleman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2006), 30.

§ 5.6   The Dilemma of Small Workplace

İbrahim (1982) is a skilled hard worker from Mehmet's village, and the two get along despite an age difference. I met with İbrahim one summer evening in front of Mehmet's real estate office while they were chatting with others from their village. İbrahim was working in a small furniture shop next to Mehmet's office, but quit a month after I met him. Two weeks after I heard he had quit I found Mehmet, İbrahim, and İbrahim's former boss Ahmet chatting in front of Mehmet's office in the evening. There I gathered that İbrahim has a lung disease, which was his reason for quiting. Ahmet, acting assertively and self-righteously, was the most talkative among them, followed by Mehmet, and then by İbrahim – just as the class order descends from employer, to the self-employed, to the worker.

While talking about İbrahim's disease, Ahmet advised him to be careful about his health and stop smoking. Later, when İbrahim said that his sickness was partially due to stress, Ahmet gave further advice: he should pray *namaz* to get rid of the stress. He was also eager to share his political views as a devoted supporter of Erdoğan, saying that Erdoğan, the best of possible political leaders, was backed by Allah (*sırtını Allah'a dayamış*). When İbrahim conveyed that he did not vote for the AKP in last election, Ahmet interrogated him. İbrahim was unwilling to share his views, so Ahmet could not pursue the discussion and advised İbrahim not act ignorantly - not to withdraw support due for insignificant reasons.

Ahmet had become an entrepreneur at the beginning of the 2000s with his older brother, from whom he recently split. He moved to İkitelli in 2004, and when I met him, he was living in an apartment in the same building where his workshop employing three people occupied the basement. He was complaining about the current situation: "Trade is not what it used to be, there is no morality anymore. One's word used to mean something, now even checks and bonds do not work." Meanwhile Ahmet's six-year-old daughter came and asked İbrahim about his son, who is the same age. I later learned the two were friends.

Soon the *ezan* from the mosque across the street announced the time to pray, and Ahmet left to pray together with Bayram, Mehmet's partner. Upon

Ahmet's departure, İbrahim's mood immediately changed and urgently spoke out against Ahmet, as if in revenge for his own prior reticence.

How dishonorable! My disease is also related to the chemicals we used in the workshop making furniture. We had a fight with him one day before I got sick. I demanded a pay raise, but he didn't give an additional dime. I worked there for five years and I always did the work of two men. I kept telling him to hire someone to work with me, and he kept telling that he would do it after this, after that. Can I ever tell him that I will finish a job after this or that? No! I asked for a man, but he later brought me a kid. He told me to teach him. I asked for someone to lower my workload, but he loaded me with the weight of teaching… The next day we had the dispute over the pay raise, and I went home for the tea break at 10 o'clock as I always do. While I sat at home, I had trouble breathing, but it passed. I went back to the workshop, but when I was about to go in the front door, I couldn't breathe and fell. He always boasts about how generous he is. You know what? He didn't even drive me to a hospital. Can you believe that? … A friend of mine used to say you shouldn't trust those who are always talking about religion and faith. I used to say him, "my friend, you shouldn't make such generalizations." One in every two of Ahmet's words is Allah, Koran, etc. But this is how much he cares about his worker. He goes to the mosque to build his business. I spent five years for nothing. Normally I don't come here [Mehmet's place], because I don't want to see him.

Mehmet backed İbrahim, saying things like "employers are always like that." İbrahim's criticism and reaction to Ahmet was unexpected. It was a good case of the exposure of "hidden transcripts." When Ahmet came back from praying, İbrahim reverted to his previous mood just as quickly and acted as if he had no problems with Ahmet. When Ahmet left again, İbrahim became furious again. The fact İbrahim did not or could not show his anger to Ahmet's face and the weight of the anger he was otherwise so willing to share were remarkable. Neither of us had much time that evening, so we had to separate.

When we met a week later, I had the chance to learn the details of his story. That week it became clear that İbrahim would not need surgery but would soon recover with a drug treatment. Meanwhile, he found a new job thanks to

a relative and had begun working in a larger, nearby furniture workshop. İbrahim had obviously accumulated many grievances about his employer, but the order of events that led İbrahim to quit was as follows: he had been demanding a twentyfive percent pay raise and quarreled with Ahmet about it, which was not usual in their relationship. The next day he suffered the breathing crisis and was hospitalized. When we crossed paths at Mehmet's office, he was recovering and was planning to return to work. Two days later, he went to Ahmet and told him that he would keep working for him if he would agree to the demanded pay raise. Ahmet again refused, and İbrahim quit for good. İbrahim's double dealings that evening made sense when I understood that he was planning to try to keep his job, though with a better wage. He realized that I was surprised he attempted to keep his job, even though he despises Ahmet. He explained: "When I get used to something, it is very hard for me to quit. This is not only about work."

İbrahim mostly made wardrobes in Ahmet's workshop. He provided me a detailed calculation of the business' expenses and profits showing that Ahmet could easily afford the wage he was demanding. İbrahim told how another young, well-mannered, religious man, who used to work for Ahmet also quit after his request for a moderate, ten percent pay raise was refused some months ago. İbrahim kept in touch with this man, and he was doing well in a new job after he quit. It seemed that he served as a concrete example, encouraging İbrahim to act.

While passing another furniture workshop that night, he told that the owner of the workshop had seen him the other day and asked what he was doing. When he heard that İbrahim had quit from Ahmet's place, he expressed his surprise: "How will they survive without you? You were the one doing all the production!" As a true hard worker, İbrahim was proud to relate this story and also that Ahmet kept calling to ask about the details of production and the machines. Indeed, one machine in the workshop was especially sophisticated and only run by İbrahim. Ahmet called and asked if he could stop by to demonstrate some specific functions, and İbrahim did not refuse. His generosity might well be interpreted as a form of compliance, a sign of how he feels inferior to his employer even though their official employment relationship has ended. However, by acting in line with the moral code of generosity,

İbrahim might actually be building a moral superiority over Ahmet, reinforcing his criticism of Ahmet's immoral behavior. Besides, from what I felt from his account of that visit, he cherished returning to the workshop as a much-needed savior, as it gave him a feeling of worth.

İbrahim was working in a micro-enterprise[69] employing three to four people, one of whom was Ahmet's relative. He never thought to organize a collective action, which would be even more of a challenge than it usually is. But as a hard worker, he was aware and proud of his contribution to the profits of the business and demanded fair compensation in return. Once it was refused, he quit as a way of resistance. The indifference of his boss to İbrahim's newly emerged health condition served as the final straw, making it easier for him to make that decision.

Every act of quitting is not a form of resistance;[70] however, as has long been acknowledged, some resignations are indeed a form of resistance, and high levels of labor turnover most likely indicate a level of conflict within the organization.[71] İbrahim's quitting was definitely a form of resistance, because it was mainly due to the denial of his request for a pay raise. When it was denied, he had to either accept the situation or raise the stakes. In a micro workplace he did have many options other than quitting.

Indeed, the option to exit was not easy for İbrahim. Allen elaborates that "the decision to quit will be strongly influenced by the extent to which employees are willing to trade-off the uncertainties and costs of exit against the certainties of staying."[72] İbrahim's futile effort to maintain relations with Ahmet and his last attempt to convince Ahmet reveals his reluctance to face the uncertainties of quitting. The phrase, "I spent my five years just for nothing" marks his lost hope, a widespread hope of the working class to be recognized and appreciated by employers, which leads one to become a privileged, secure

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69   Here I use the European Union definition of a micro enterprise: firms employing less than ten workers. See "Micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises: definition and scope," EUR – Lex Access to European Union Law, accessed Novermber 10, 2015, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3An26026.

70   Noon and Blyton, *The Realities of Work*, 263.

71   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 87; Watson, *Sociology, Work and Industry*, 231.

72   Matthew M. C. Allen, "Hirschman and Voice," in *The Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*, ed. Adrian Wilkinson, et al. (New York: Edward Elgar Press, 2014), 43.

employee of the enterprise. This hope arises from the hidden injury of dependency and marks an imagined transformation into interdependency.

5.6.1 Discussion

Worker concentration is an important structural factor that conditions labor militancy, because small enterprises tend to sustain a 'family feeling', creating an atmosphere which individualizes conflicts. Workers in these firms are "hobbled by their expendability," since ten striking worker are much more easily replaced than a hundred.[73] Competition in the market compels many small enterprises to work for relatively low profit margins, a fact which is observed by workers and leads them to realize that some proportion of their unpaid labor is transferred to other firms.[74] Actual kinship relations play an important role in the employment strategies of small enterprises – at least in Turkey – which reinforces paternalism and patriarchy as means of labor regulation.[75] Therefore, it is no surprise and is well-documented that larger workplaces meet with more worker resistance.[76] For example, Dubetsky observed that the growing labor movement in Istanbul of the 1960s and 1970s did not reach smaller factories.[77] On the other hand, as we see in İbrahim's case, this does not mean that worker resistance in small workplaces is negligible.

While it was an individual strategy in the case of İbrahim, exit can also be a collective strategy. Ferdi once worked for seven months in a workshop that was producing small souvenirs and employing nearly twenty people. Fro three months running, the employer paid only part of their wages due to alleged financial difficulties. After demanding their full wages several times Ferdi and six others quit together in protest. Ferdi immodestly explained: "You know, I

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73   Eva Rana Bellin, *Stalled Democracy: Capital, Labor, and the Paradox of State-Sponsored Development* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 124.

74   Geniş, *İşç Sınıfının Kıyısında*, 225.

75   Dubetsky, "Kinship, Primordial Ties, and Factory Organization in Turkey: An Anthropological View," 444; White, *Money Makes Us Relatives: Women's Labor in Urban Turkey*.

76   Mann, *Consciousness and Action among the Western Working Class*, 23; Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 161.

77   Dubetsky, "Kinship, Primordial Ties, and Factory Organization in Turkey: An Anthropological View."

was a union steward; I learned how to defend my right." But a few moments later he admitted: "I'm sure that after we left, the boss advertised the jobs, and no less than fifty people applied." I questioned whether they could have done anything stronger, more assertive, and he replied: "What can you do in that situation? The best would be that all twenty workers quit together, but we couldn't convince more than the six of us. And they were mostly young, single kids without much to worry about." Later Ferdi and his friends had to visit the workplace a view times to obtain their unpaid wages, but they received them in the end.

Kinship can guarantee compliance and more, as we see in the case of Selim. It can also work as a special form of regulation, which puts pressure on the worker even if she wants to behave otherwise. However, a worker can also utilize kinship as a tool of class struggle. With his two brothers, Hayrettin runs a small garment workshop employing around fifteen people. Hayrettin and his brothers were not sure whether to prefer kin, because some had applied an unexpected tactic. Hayrettin explains:

> There are such relatives who call the village, spread the word that Hayrettin is about to bankrupt. They stir people up when we delay wages only for one week. Can you believe that? How can I trust my kin after that? Then I have to calm the people down who keep calling from the village.

Nevertheless, the aforementioned structural features of small workplaces generally serve as impediments to the emergence and grpwth of worker militancy. Therefore, workers' militancy in small workplaces tends toward moderation: less assertive and less defensive than in larger workplaces. In his focused, quantitative research on Turkish small-industry workers, Geniş observes that class struggle in these workplaces is bound to be individual, hidden, embryonic, and limited to the issue of the intensification of work.[78] Durak also reveals the entrapment of workers in small workplaces, although he explains this

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78   Geniş, *Işç Sınıfının Kıyısında*, 228.

solely with religious cultural hegemony.[79] Even Mesut, a talented and determined working class hero I present in the next chapter, could not build a mobilization in the long years he worked in small workshops. He was even close to giving it up. However, for serendipitous reasons, he began working in a factory and his potential finally became activated.

This is not destiny. Indeed, subjective or objective leverages can be found or built and then employed. We know that the mid nineteenth century militancy of French working class was the work of those working in small workshops.[80] Recently, embroidery workers in Istanbul, who are mostly employed in small workshops, managed to build a relatively strong mobilization.[81] A newly founded textile union for which I volunteer as an organizer has recently organized three small workshops, significantly improving working conditions. These are just a few exceptions. The broader point is that small workplaces place strong barriers on the emergence of worker mobilizations to emerge, even stronger barriers than the de facto ones.

Although it varies in different countries and sectors, a considerable proportion of the working class works and will keep working in small workplaces. The reason this problem has been largely overlooked is because of an expectation the small workplaces would diminish over time. For the Global North, some scholars believe this expectation was valid at least until the 1980s,[82] while others suggest the trend was never actually present.[83] In any event, the experience of the Global South is different and varied. Furthermore, since flexible

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79 Yasin Durak, *Emeğin Tevekkülü: Konya'da Işç-Işvere Ilişkiler Ve Dindarlık* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2013).

80 William Sewell Jr, "Artisans, Factory Workers, and the Formation of the French Working Class, 1789-1848," in *Working-Class Formation: Constructing Cases and Comparisons. Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, ed. Ira Katznelson and Aristide Zolberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

81 Pınar Öğünç, "Film Gibi Emek Savaşı," *Cumhuriyet*, May 11 2015.

82 William J. Baumol, Alan S. Blinder, and Edward N. Wolff, *Downsizing in America: Reality, Causes, and Consequences: Reality, Causes, and Consequences* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), 3.

83 Alejandro Portes and William Haller, "The Informal Economy," in *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 415.

capitalism of the 1980s began fissuring existing workplaces into smaller ones,[84] to weaken workers associational and structural powers, among other reasons. Supported by subcontracting practices, the number of small-business start-ups has indeed increased "almost exponentially" since the mid-1990s, especially in the Global South.[85] On the other hand, there are signs indicating that average firm size has also been declining in the Global North in the recent decades.[86]

What proportion of the working class toils in small enterprises under conditions that render resistance even more demanding? Statistics are inconclusive due to differing measures, differing definitions, and the question of on which data to focus. The most meaningful among available data points for our purposes is the ratio of workers working in firms employing less than ten workers to all workers. In 2011, nearly 35 percent of all workers are working in firms with less than ten workers.[87] In Turkey approximately one in three workers who attempt or consider resistance has to face the dilemma I dissected in this section.

To put Turkey in global perspective, the first thing to note is that in terms of the size of its firms, Turkey is among countries with the smallest. While the above statistics is not available for comparison, the ratio of persons employed (not specifically workers) in small workplaces to total persons employed in different sectors and the ratio of urban workers in micro enterprises to total urban employment are available. Among a relatively comparable set of OECD countries, Latin American countries, and India, the mentioned ratios in Turkey are smaller only than India, Greece, and Mexico. They are greater but relatively close to other Latin American countries, Italy, Spain, and East European countries. More specific data reveal nuances, such as the ratio of persons employed by firms employing less than ten people to total employment specifically in the service sector. In this ratio, Turkey is outpaced by other countries such as Italy, Korea, Poland, and Portugal. To sum, although Turkey is

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84   Weil, *The Fissured Workplace*.

85   Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, 89.

86   Noon and Blyton, *The Realities of Work*, 40; Baumol, Blinder, and Wolff, *Downsizing in America: Reality, Causes, and Consequences: Reality, Causes, and Consequences*, 3-5.

87   TÜİK, *Household Labour Force Statistics 2011*, 58.

among the extreme cases, the number of workers working in micro enterprises are nowhere near marginal even in the strongholds of capitalism, such as the United Kingdom and Germany, where nearly one in five employed people work in a workplace of less than ten people.[88]

§ 5.7 The Dilemma of Morality: Hidden Requirement of Working-Class Struggle

In his seventeen years as a worker, Cihan changed his workplace fourteen times mainly due to his resistant attitude. Once he quit to protest the unjust dismissal of a coworker. On another occasion he quit a foreman position, because the manager cursed a worker next to Cihan. He opposed the manager and then talked to the employer, but when the employer instead defended his manager, Cihan quit. In another workplace he was fired because he organized a work stoppage. He worked mostly in small workshops with the exception of two factories, one of which had a relatively militant union, Birleşik-Metal-İş. Working conditions in this unionized factory were "incomparably better" than in the small workshops, and the union was strong enough that they would perform work stoppages in cases of grievance.

Cihan has many stories of individual resistance where he protested against his superiors. Once, he objected to a "vicious" production manager who prayed in the education room while Cihan and his coworkers had to pray in the changing room. Cihan said, "is your *namaz* more holy than ours?" The manager gave him an unpaid day off as a warning. Because in all those years he also improved his craft, the management made him production manager

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88 The data presented in this paragraph are taken and calculated from various sources. The OECD provides the richest range of data, but the data for Turkey is incorrect. See OECD, *Entrepreneurship at a Glance*, 25-33. Data for Turkey is based on TÜİK. See TÜİK, *Household Labour Force Statistics 2009* (Ankara: Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu Matbaası, 2010); *Household Labour Force Statistics 2011*. For the data of Latin American countries, see Portes and Haller, "The Informal Economy." Also see the UN's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean website, accessed November 23, 2015, www.cepal.org. And lastly, for data on India, see National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector, *Financing of Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector* (New Delhi: National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector, 2007).

in another workshop, but he resigned from the post after just two days. He remembers the management meeting in which he participated:

> The general manager said: "We make the rules here. If we wish, we can cancel the tea break." They were talking like that. I said to myself: "Look at this conversation." I couldn't handle it.

His demoralization about collective action is not arbitrary, but due to several disappointing experiences. One of the worst defeats he suffered took place in 2003, when he was 24 years old. It was in a factory employing nearly two hundred people, but the departments were strictly separated, such that the social atmosphere was almost like a workshop. He was the foreman of his department, supervising eight people. In June, the management announced that the July wage increase had been cancelled. One of his coworkers was Orhan, the third comrade of his clique along with Bülent. Upon hearing the announcement, Cihan told his coworkers in the department during the next tea break that the next morning they should come to the workshop, but not work. All of the workers agreed. However, in the morning "the guys, who normally begin working at 8:10 or so, had begun working 5 minutes before 8 o'clock." Only Cihan and Orhan refused to work: "I don't break my word." The two were dismissed the next week.

In another factory where he began working in 2009, the crisis hit the company hard. Cihan recalls that the management began delaying wages for a month and even more. He he was among the leaders of a couple successful work stoppages with high levels of participation. Cihan explains:

> We could arrange collective work stoppages there. But that was because people were so pissed off after 30-40 days of wage delays. In normal, everyday conditions, when people get their wages and all that, no one stands up for a right or demand. This is workers' general character. They don't do anything unless the bosses clutch their throat.

Cihan's impatience and hot-tempered personality help him keep his distance from management and therefore to be more critical. However, this disposition, which serves as an advantage on one front, becomes a disadvantage on the other. It is not advantageous for the crucial task of building close relations with coworkers, which are necessary for collective mobilization. Cohesion

among workers is a "fundamental precondition for solidarity" and "friendship networks provide an essential mechanism for the development and implementation of collective strategies."[89] Cihan's impatience fuels his ideological stance to make him doctrinaire. As I mention before, to become and stay radical one needs ideology, but ideology that is doctrinaire easily becomes an obstacle to relating with other workers, a problem Cihan admits but cannot not overcome:

> I have such a problem. Since I am trying to behave according to Islamic thought, I can't build close relationships with people who don't have such an attitude. We don't hold similar views, we can't make conversation, and we don't have the same reactions. Therefore, dialog stops at some point, and those kind of people run away from me.

Cihan is neither enthusiastic nor hopeful about workers' collective struggles for better working conditions and compensation. His experiences and the way he interprets them have turned him into a pessimist. However, he somehow came to the political belief that the goal of workers should not be to better working conditions, but to be rid of being a worker. The solution he embraced together with his comrade Bülent was to establish firms run on equal footing by the workers themselves, serving as a real, viable alternative business model, but also as a supportive institution for all workers and their struggles. This is an exiting idea that has Islamic connotations,[90] but also parallels current debates in Western anti-capitalism.[91] Cihan and Bülent visited many Islamist groups to share their project and ask for help, but did not find support mainly because Islamist groups in Turkey do not concern themselves with the problems of workers. Cihan and Bülent's ideological barriers kept them away from socialist groups; however, they would not meet with much enthusiasm if they

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89   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 207.

90   See for example Necmettin Erbakan, "Adil Düzen: 21 Soru, 21 Cevap," in *<http://www.necmettinerbakan.net/haberler/21-soru-21-cevab.html>* (1994); Sabri Orman, "Kur'an Ve İktisa: Kredi Ve Faiz Meselesine Makro Sistemik Bir Yaklaşım," in *İktisa, Tarih Ve Toplum*, ed. Sabri Orman (Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2001).

91   Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*; Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Another Production Is Possible: Beyond the Capitalist Canon*, vol. 2 (London: Verso, 2006).

made a similar tour among socialist groups. Among other reasons, their project is not in the repertoire of socialists in Turkey.

After their disappointing promotional tour, their practical efforts shrank to the minimum. Besides, the bold project served as a tool to belittle more traditional forms of working-class struggle such as unionization or street protests. Unfortunately, Cihan and Bülent's pessimism about the average worker and scorn even for resistant workers and groups that prioritize traditional forms of workers' struggle, have rendered them isolated, a little aloof, and practically inactive. As I observed in several meetings I organized, which gathered resistant workers to share experiences and collaborate, Cihan can be difficult and sectarian, hesitating to collaborate with non-radical or non-religious workers.

Cihan and Bülent have come to a point of doing little for their ideal, because it is audacious and requires more than just two people who trust one another, believe in the project, and have some money to gather the necessary capital. The case of Cihan reveals the adversities, dilemmas, and traps awaiting the radical worker. The social craft of becoming a mobilizing and transforming leader of a collective is different and separate from the intellectual and psychological craft of becoming a radical. The two might even contradict each other, as the case of Cihan demonstrates. Cihan and Bülent's unfulfilled potential sheds light from a different angle on why radicalism does not expand among the working class. In their case, we see the dilemma of the stereotypical middle-class, intellectual radical. However, working class radicals exist, and they are not immune from the same dilemma: the love-hate relationship of the radical with the working class. As Arif Dirlik shows, the radical has to change and lead workers, but at the same time, she has to restrain herself from looking down on them, which would recreate alienation and domination within the radical movement itself, rendering the struggle meaningless.

> [T]he revolutionary, too, must be listening all the time and must not merely impose his abstractions upon the revolutionary process, which would merely involve the projection of his own alienation onto the latter. While the revolutionary is in the process of leading, in other words, his leadership must be defined in terms of the dialectic between the

revolutionary consciousness and the consciousness of the social pre-
sent with which he must integrate himself if the revolution is to issue
in a new culture of liberation.[92]

As shown, Cihan's case vividly illustrates the dilemma of the radical, namely
through his alienation from workers due to their alleged compliance, which
serves as a barrier to the spread of working-class resistance. However, I men-
tion this dilemma in passing and will move on to another, much significant
one. I sensed it implicitly, but could not pin it down until I listened Cihan's
analysis of working class struggle. It is the dilemma of morality.

Working class struggle does not spring solely from rational pursuit of ma-
terial interests, but also requires moral convictions. At a certain level, it's nei-
ther the natural nor rational reaction of a subject who seeks to free herself
from hegemony. Rather, it always involves a degree of moral choice. The rela-
tive importance of moral motivations with respect to material ones is even
greater among the leaders vis-à-vis the followers of collective struggle. Thus is
the dilemma of morality of working-class struggle is that it requires moral
convictions that are bound to be subjective by definition. These specific moral
convictions must contradict the hegemonic morality in certain ways, and col-
lective struggle always requires some level of altruism. These factors render
the moral convictions necessary for struggle rare and fragile among the work-
ing class. This is why the issue of morality is as a dilemma for resistance. It
suggests that resistance is neither normal nor to be expected, even for enlight-
ened minds – as if such a thing exists. It is fated to be somewhat arbitrary.

I mention in the section about compliance what Cihan said to his cowork-
ers who hesitated when spoiled food was served for lunch at: "My friends,
without demanding, without making a sacrifice, you won't attain anything."
In a similar situation mentioned above, to mobilize his coworkers he recalled
telling them: "Indeed, we might face the consequences… We might be fired,
but if we don't do it, this boss's edicts will continue and we'll keep suffering."
In these lines "making a sacrifice," and "facing the consequences" are the key-
words, which serve as the entrance to our discussion of morality. Although

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92   Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*, 44.

there are exceptions, working-class resistance mostly involves sacrifices varying from relatively modest ones such as time, energy, job satisfaction, and psychological comfort, to relatively greater ones such as reprisal from supervisors, loss of a, being blacklisted, police repression, or capital flight.

Cihan explains:

People complain about things, but they don't want to make the sacrifices necessary to change them. That's what it is all about! Our main problem! For example, in the 1970s people made sacrifices, they paid the price to change things. But their children's generation, this one, they don't want make a sacrifice. They want things ready-made.

What are the sacrifices to be precise? The sociology of work sheds light on the everyday ones: Watson asserts that cooperation gives stability to daily life by minimizing or controlling differences of interest among people.[93] This grants a positive psychological implication to cooperation between workers and management, whereas conflict is marked with negative psychological overtones. Using a pool of qualitative data, Hodson much more precisely reveals that resistance actually "comes at a cost in terms of satisfaction and meaning in work," and as an unintended consequence, has a strong tendency to erode worker well-being and dignity.[94] To connect to my arguments about the meaning of work, consider Rothschild's succinct rephrasing of Hodson's finding : "Resistance (e.g., lowering one's effort) can end up damaging the sense of pride that people so intently seek in their work."[95]

Resistance is always a journey to uncertainty. I realized in my investigations of various collective worker mobilization that if resistance does not achieve its end (which is common), it is never possible for workers to go back to their psychological starting point – leave management reprisals out of it. The job, the workplace, the supervisors – all seem even more intolerable than before. To begin a resistance and keep pursuing it for the necessary time, one has to convince herself (and others, if it is a collective mobilization) of the

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93   Watson, *Sociology, Work and Industry*, 211.

94   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 257.

95   Joyce Rothshild, "Managers' Conduct and Workers' Dignity: Making the Sociological Link," *Contemporary Sociology* 33, no. 1 (2004).

atrociousness of injustice in the workplace. This highly critical subjectivity that emerges with and is forged by resistance does not fit into one's daily routine after a defeat.

To scrutinize other sacrifices necessary for working-class struggle, I employ and reframe the problem of transition raised by Przeworski. Przeworski was probably the first socialist thinker to thoroughly investigate the cost to workers of the transition to socialism.[96] He convincingly contends that a transition to socialism must generate economic crisis and therefore involves a deterioration of workers' welfare during the transition period. This might even last the lifetime of a generation. Since capitalism, on the other hand, has a historical record of improving workers conditions though at a slow pace, "the socialist orientation cannot be deduced from the material interests of workers."[97] Rational workers motivated by material interests would not strive for socialism in a reasonably well-functioning capitalist system, "because of the temporary loss of welfare that capitalists would be able to inflict upon them as a retribution."[98] Even if they do, support for socialism would drop off once the economic decline of the transition period hit.

Affirming this important argument, Wright ties the issue of sacrifice to the temporal term of transition. In an early work, he gives credit to Przeworski's argument even though he emphasizes that it might be self-fulfilling prophecy:

> It may well be the case in practice that the exploited would be worse off if they attempt to eliminate a given form of exploitation, even though counterfactually they would be better off in the absence of such exploitation.[99]

Recently Wright has been building on and developing Przeworski's thesis pronouncedly supporting the idea:

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96 Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*; "Material Interests, Class Compromise, and the Transition to Socialism," *Politics & Society* 10, no. 2 (1980).

97 *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, 177.

98 Ibid., 237.

99 Erik Olin Wright, *Classes* (London: Verso, 1985), 120.

Depending upon how deep and prolonged the transition trough is, it may not be in the material interests of most people to support a rup-tural path to socialism even if they firmly believe that life would be better once the transition was weathered.[100]

Even more troubling, he underscores that no matter what the expectations of actors encountering a transition, the hypothesis that workers' welfare will be better after the transition is shadowed in uncertainty. In one lecture, Wright succinctly captures the problem reminiscent of Cihan's own observation: "Being in socialism might be in [workers] interests, but struggling for socialism would not."[101]

The problem of transition costs are not peculiar to the macro phenomenon of transitioning to socialism, but also valid for most working-class struggles, especially if we do not define costs as strictly material. If we acknowledge that moderate forms of sacrifice – such as time, energy, job satisfaction, and psychological comfort – are costs, just like the material retributions "capitalists would be able to inflict upon" workers, we see that there are always transition costs for workers to resist and struggle (the exceptions being hidden, unde-clared forms of resistance). Neither Przeworski nor Wright extended their arguments in this direction which would uncover a fundamental feature of working-class resistance. During worker resistance, the welfare of activists will most likely worsen before it gets better, if it ever does.

Sayer summarizes Bourdieu's similar insight that this problem is not peculiar to class, as well but valid for other forms of domination: "[I]n the face of deeply embedded undeserved inequalities, resistance may be more painful and less rewarding than compliance and deference (…)."[102] Indeed, resistance almost always entails sacrifice. This is one reason why interests by themselves do not explain resistance; moral commitments have a crucial role in the process. To explore the other reasons, we should return to Cihan.

In June 2013, I organized a meeting of militant workers I know – including some from İkitelli – to introduce them one another and brainstorm about class

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100   *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 315.

101   "Class Struggle and Class Compromise."

102   Andrew Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

struggle. Among others, participants include Osman and Mecnun, protagonists of the collective struggle I present in the next chapter. During the interesting, five-hour-long discussion, Cihan at some point asked the others: "would you promise that you will keep struggling for workers even if you somehow come by a serious amount of money and become rich?" Without taking the question seriously Osman and Mecnun laughed that they were unsure. Later, recalling this moment, Cihan makes a crucial point:

> Nobody talks about this. If I somehow become powerful, will I defend the same position? I know people who turned into "employers," when they became foremen. They oppressed workers in just the same way. Oppression continued and they began defending it. They exploited the labor of others. I won't do anything with people who cannot assure me that they won't do this. Everyone may get power someday. Of course you may have an accident. It happeden to me once. I was bewildered. You don't pursue it purposefully, but it happens to you … you get some power. Then you begin saying to yourself, "I did it! I became self-sufficient!" Once your income increases a little, things change for you. You want more. To resist becomes harder and harder. To pass the test of poverty was easy, but the test of wealth is much harder. Once you get that power…! In the chapter of Koran about Moses, his people tell him: "Moses! Before you came we were in pain and were suffering. You came, and it is still the same." Moses answers: "Your turn will come, wait for it. God will make you dominant in this land." Indeed, their turn came, and then began the hypocrisy. Everybody's turn will come someday, and then God looks at you. … If I had that mentality, I would own my own enterprise by now. I could be making a living by sitting on a chair and exploiting others' labor. I told you, I am an expert at the job. I could lower prices due to my expertise. Workers are content with minimum wage, anyway. A person should promise that he will defend the same position, even if he becomes powerful.

As I note above, Cihan tends to exaggerate and speak self-righteously, but – once again – he has a point. Of course everybody's "turn" might not come in this life, especially if we limit the turn to be particularly about the work life. However, it is not rare, if we do not restrict upward-mobility to clear-cut form

of becoming an employer. In the hierarchies of corporate capitalism, there are many positions that give a worker some, limited power over a group of her coworkers. If we include those who move upward at least once in lifetime – via entrepreneurship or promotion – and if we assume that a large proportion of them did not pass Cihan's test and that their failure was directly observed by even a greater number of workers, then we can accurately understand the extent of the damage. Choosing the route of resistance and continuing the struggle even if management offers the carrot of upward mobility requires moral convictions beyond a rational understanding of one's material interest.

Few workers can decline a manager's offer to be promoted to a foreman. Osman, a garment worker and a friend of Mustafa, the lay philosopher is among them as mentioned in the third chapter. On a visit one evening to Mustafa's, he explained the reason: "I did not want to be caught between the boss and the workers. If you become a foreman, you have to lie all the time." Neither is it easy to remain militant after receiving a promotion.[103] In the following chapter I present a similar, tragic story in detail: an unexpected version of upward mobility through becoming a union representative.

After Cihan made the tirade recounted above, Bülent disclosed the analysis they had forged together:

> We struggle to explain to people that we are oppressed, exploited, that we share this destiny together. We express that we should not stay silent about this, that we should do something. We inform them that Allah also demands us to do that. But most people do not agree. They don't acknowledge exploitation. To give a concrete example, I tell them that we don't have to work ten hours a day, that even six or five hours would be more than enough to produce the things we use in our lives. The rest is what the boss takes from us to line his pockets. But they

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103   Another example I recently witnessed: one of the most prominent bastions of working-class militancy in Istanbul is the hospital of the University of Istanbul. Subcontracted workers have been struggling impressively. During one recent protest, two leaders explained to me the reason why janitors at the hospital had lately become demobilized. After numerous unsuccessful tactics, management promoted leaders among the janitors to foremen. Unfortunately, the tactic worked, at least for now: three of the four formerly militant workers turned into ordinary foremen, enjoying their moderate authority.

insist that we have to work for ten hours to survive. I believe this is because he thinks he would do the same if he were in the position of our boss, who imposes these conditions on us. Because he thinks to do the same, he cannot develop a critique inside. He is not honest in the first place, that's why. Because he is actually longing for such an opportunity.

Dark words, indeed, that seem to blame the victim. But Cihan and Bülent also blame the powerful – the employers – and they do not speak about the oppressed from a safe distance, as an Other. Their words are exempt from the self-conceit of the middle class. They must be dealt with cautiously due to the pessimism and a different version of self-conceit – a less harmful one – namely the self-conceit of working-class radical, which leads Cihan and Bülent to dark generalizations. Their words importantly reveal the basic moral nature of their convictions, which are necessary for working-class criticism, let alone resistance. As Hitlin and Vaisey point out, sociology's shift away from the normative or moral can be explained at least partially by cultural sociologists' reluctance to "blame the victim," which is a fair, well-intentioned sensibility.[104] Cihan and Bülent's words, indeed, do blame the victim to an extent. However, Cihan and Bülent are not sociologists producing analysis aimed at an academic public, a struggle with its own rules and strategies. Cihan and Bülent

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104   Steven Hitlin and Stephen Vaisey, "Back to the Future: Reviving the Sociology of Morality," in *Handbook of the Sociology of Morality*, ed. Steven Hitlin and Stephen Vaisey (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2010), 6. As a perfect example, Bourdieu in Pascalian Meditations openly dismisses the use of morality, asserting that it causes victim blaming. See Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 201. He defines political and moral as competitive and mutually exclusive terms, so that to name some social phenomenon moral necessarily obscures its political nature. On the other hand, he also acknowledges that other virtues such as 'disinterestedness and devotion' should proliferate in better world, but arbitrarily calls these virtues "civic" instead of moral. Civic serves him better than moral to underscore the impact of social structure on subjectivities, which is actually no less valid for moral. However, morality is key for the subjectivist perspective, which we need because – as Bourdieu also insists – social science cannot be reduced to either objectivist or subjectivist visions. Considering the issue at stake, it is obvious that there are few ways to transform structure: a minority with subjectivist, mostly moral motivations, embracing a different morality than promoted by the structure, will struggle and grow if lucky. Finally, they will change the structure and their different morality will become the one promoted by the system.

are members of working class and directly experience the complicity of the working class in their own exploitation on a daily basis. They are also aware that no one but workers themselves can lead the struggle to stop or at least reduce exploitation. To do this, workers must first change themselves. As well known, blame or – to use a better word – critique is necessary for self-reflection and self-change.

A final note from Cihan concerns the privileges workers already enjoy, irrespective of those he may someday acquire. For this, in line with the intersectionality thesis, we should leave the sphere of class behind and consider other spheres of systematic domination. Cihan explains how a male worker can turn into an oppressor and exploiter once he obtains the position of power in relation to the weaker, namely women and children.

> I know this mentality well, because mine was the same until around the age of 22. You see the boss as a mighty father, as a boss-father. And when you get back home, you become the boss-father. You oppress women. You believe that neither your wife nor your children deserve anything. For example, in fights over inheritance, you don't acknowledge the rights of women and try to leave them nothing.

To gender and age, we should add ethnicity, the problems of which thrive in Turkish society in general – and therefore among the working class through tensions between Turks and Kurds, in addition to ones between Sunnis and Alevis. Working class Turks maintain the privilege of swearing at Kurds – a privilege, which is not insignificant. Similarly, many Sunnis openly despise Alevis in conversations with other Sunnis. The fact that they behave exploitively in those relations where they enjoy a powerful position may legitimize the exploitation they suffer in the position of the dominated. They would be hypociritical if they challenged the authority and exploitation of their employer. And they are probably subliminally aware of this fact, even if they do not wish to admit it. Many people hope to enjoy a more powerful, future position in the complex web relations in which they are embedded. This means they have something to lose if a call to end all forms of exploitation and oppression were somehow successful.

Sennett and Cobb capture this problem brilliantly:

> The real impact of class is that a man can play out both sides of the power situation in his own life, become alternately judge and judged. … This represents the internalizing of class conflict, the process by which struggle between men leads to struggle within each man.[105]

This internal class struggle within each man is nothing but a moral struggle, that is about "what kinds of behaviour are good, and thus how we should treat others and be treated by them."[106] Morality "entails ideas about proper and improper, right and wrong, and good and evil," which are a component of the psyche of every individual.[107] From qualitative studies we know that "morality plays an extremely prominent role in workers' descriptions of who they are and, more important, who they are not."[108] Nevertheless, the significance and essentialness of morality for resistance, especially in its collective forms, are arguably uncharted issues.

Morality is crucial to our discussion in two ways. First, it suggests that human relations are not solely about "Hobbesian pursuit of advantage in terms of economic, cultural and social capital" as most sociologists depicted it.[109] Human action is "not just strategic, instrumental, or utilitarian, aimed at

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105   Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, 98. The only flaw in this passage is their usage of class, which they define in such a broad way as to include other forms of domination, including gender, age, and ethnicity. This might be to broaden the analysis to an intersectional approach, which is fair given standards of the 1970s. However, later debates convincingly argued that this intersectionalization involves the colonization of class at the expense of other forms of domination, which are not of the same ontologically sort.

106   Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class*, 8.

107   Vincent Jeffries, "Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity as a Field of Study," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity: Formulating a Field of Study*, ed. Vincent Jeffries (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 6.

108   Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*, 19. See also Kefalas, *Working-Class Heroes: Protecting Home, Community, and Nation in a Chicago Neighborhood.* and Skeggs, *Formations of Class & Gender: Becoming Respectable.*

109   Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class*, 3.

achieving a particular end."[110] Self-reflection, relationships, and communities can define or transform what is deemed good and virtuous, which has at least some influence on human action. Hopefully human rationality is not restricted to bourgeois rationality, which is a peculiar system of rationality where "the economic utility of an action (or an object, relationship, institution, etc.) defines its reasonableness."[111] Therefore, resistance cannot be derived from or reduced to interests.

The second point is a result of the first, but as it is fundamental for our topic, it should be clearly identified. Morality can indeed have an "apologetic function in legitimizing structures of domination," as argued by Marx and many others. But it is not only a source of discipline and conformity, but also of resistance and conflict.[112] With possible exceptions, resistance does not spring merely from interests, but a moral motivation is required: a moral understanding of injustice is necessary for resistance to emerge, as underscored by mobilization theories.[113] Moreover, much emphasized processes of identity and group formation necessary for collective resistance to emerge are, in fact, deeply moral processes, a fact not yet adequately acknowledged by mobilization theories.[114] Indeed, "altruism, morality, and social solidarity are … clearly interdependent"[115] and working class solidarity is not exempt.

Solidarity is the sense of unity and bonding enacted in cooperative activity to strive for common goals. It depends on some level of altruism, requiring

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110   Margarita A. Mooney, "Virtues and Human Personhood in the Social Sciences," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity: Formulating a Field of Study*, ed. Vincent Jeffries (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 28.

111   Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal, 1890-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 212.

112   Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class*, 170; Thompson, *Customs in Common*; Wright, "Foundations of a Neo-Marxist Class Analysis."

113   Jeff Goodwin, James M Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 16; Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves*, 27.

114   Michèle Lamont, "Introduction: The Return of the Moral," in *Handbook of the Sociology of Morality*, ed. Steven Hitlin and Stephen Vaisey (New York: Springer 2010).

115   Jeffries, "Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity as a Field of Study," 13.

both the will and the behavior of undertaking action that benefit other person.[116] Employing this conceptual framework, we should refrain from the conventional mistake of defining egoism and altruism as a dichotomy, rather we should take the findings of the recently emerging literature on the issue seriously. Weiss and Peres reveal that altruism and egoism are inseparable and complementary elements of morality.[117] There is a continuum between altruism and egoism; the ego is essential and inevitably, the "primary force, object and subject of moral action." Although altruistic actions are not selfless, various forms of other-regarding behavior such as mutual care, reciprocity, and volunteerism are indispensable elements for creating and fostering solidarity. The most convincing point for understanding that altruism and egoism are not a dichotomy is the fact that egos are intermingled with social life: "Individuals cannot simply be egoists because their ego contains others' egos, just as individuals can neither be purely altruistic because their egos are in the other's egos."

Recall the conversation in the park depicted in detail above. Three workers serendipitously come across one another in the park began harshly criticizing their bosses without any particular stimulus, saying things like "frankly, we are being oppressed," "it is always the worker who has to sacrifice," "the bosses feather their own nests," and "the boss is going to fuck you anyway." I was brought to modest enlightenment by this interaction, leading me ask Mehmet what are the reasons for compliance when people seem more or less aware of exploitation. His answer was inspirational: "Of course they are aware, everybody is aware. But people think individually, not collectively. This is the source of our problem."

When I first heard this, I sensed the importance of the remark, but could not fully get my head around why it was so crucial until I realized the significance of morality for working-class struggle. I understood this thanks to Cihan and many other people. It is well known that workers' resistance can become effective only if it is collective. As I argue, for this collectivity to emerge

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116   Ibid., 7.

117   Raquel Weiss and Paulo Peres, "Beyond the Altruism-Egoism Dichotomy: A New Typology to Capture Morality as a Complex Phenomenon," ibid., 74-75.

and advance, at least some moral values and especially altruism are required. At a basic level, collective resistance is by definition "prefigurative," to use the recently trendy term.[118] To emerge, it requires morality that is different than and in conflict with the hegemonic, bourgeois morality. Whether the movement will survive, grow, diminish, or withdraw, depends on the trajectory of this moral spark.

This fact is somehow acknowledged but left unspoken within the labor movement itself, probably because of the deep influence of historical materialism – at least – on the discourse of the labor movement. As an overused and overloaded concept of the labor, solidarity serves as a euphemism for this specific altruism that is necessary for worker mobilizations to emerge and grew. In the next chapter, I further scrutinize the issue of morality with all of its implications and complications in the context of a case study of a collective struggle.

§ 5.8 Conclusion

This chapter scrutinizes the possibilities and limits of resistance featuring concrete cases and the dilemmas they face. The significance of these dilemmas is that they restrict acts of resistance – to use Bourdieu's words – "almost automatically," even without much deliberate intervention by the powerful. "One only has to let the objective mechanisms do their work, which may be work upon oneself, in order, unwittingly, to grant the social order its ratification" as Bourdieu claims.[119] The dilemmas I propose are examples of objective mechanisms at work for the working class.

I began by examining the major dilemma for the capitalist domination of workers: "in practice capital must surrender the means of production to the 'control' of the workers for their actual use in the production process."[120] This

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118   For usage of the term in the Turkish context, see Kenan Erçel, Ceren Özselçuk, and Yahya M. Madra, "Farklı Bir Ekonomi Için Ekonomiye Farklı Bakmak: Kavram, Etik, Siyaset," *Birikim*, no. 315 (2016).

119   Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 181.

120   Cressey and MacInnes, "Voting for Ford: Industrial Democracy and the Control of Labour," 14.

unavoidable dependency of capital on labor is where labor's unbreakable power of resistance lies. Capital has its own dilemmas and workers have theirs, but the respective dilemmas on either side of class struggle are not of the same kind. The dilemmas of capital's domination insure the survival of resistance against its domination, while the dileammas of worker resistace insure that the expansion of resistance will be very difficult.

Before dealing with dilemmas of working class resistance, I emphasize that resistance is one specific option for one's conditions among many. I briefly introduce four other strategies, all of which involve some level of agency. The first is to become the guardian of management's interests by serving superiors informally through flattering, informing for them, or acting as their agent. The second strategy is working hard, which can bring higher job security and promotions. Entrepreneurism, explored in detail in the first chapter, is the third strategy, while searching for a better job by mobilizing social capital is the fourth. Working-class resistance is not a natural nor obvious response to capitalist exploitation, but workers must consciously choose resistance over these and other possible strategies.

The first and principal dilemma of working-class resistance that I examine is one of dependency. Under conditions of capitalism, workers are dependent on entrepreneurs for jobs and to enjoy their share of the wealth created by capitalist production. The market does most of the work of legitimation itself, as Bourdieu remarks: "the work of legitimation of the established order is extraordinarily facilitated by the fact that it goes on almost automatically in the reality of the social world."[121] This dependence conditions resistant workers to oscillate between militancy and moderation, and to feel a deep incompetence to challenge capital in more aggressive ways. While radicalism overly focuses on its negative features, wage labor is always a sort of privilege; it signifies not only exploitation but also access to the means of production, which are owned and made operational by entrepreneurs. Under capitalism the means of production are not strictly appropriated by an impermeable group. Due to upward mobiles employers are endowed with independence and creativity; workers, on the other hand, experience and become accustomed to dependency.

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121   Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 181.

The second dilemma is the dilemma of craftsmen, who as the literature shows, are prone to highest levels of resistance and solidarity. Although expected to become extinct, craftsmen have proven themselves to be a durable group. As a craftsman, Sinan is a resister in the workplace and is critical about class relations. By experience, he knows the extent of the reach of worker resistance and how difficult is to move beyond that. He is in the upper echelon of the manual working class due to his craft. As a craftsman, to further his rights, he must move beyond the shop floor level and become involved in broader working-class mobilizations through unions or politics. However, these fronts of class struggle are destitute in today's Turkey. Moreover, they require activism, involvement with people outside of the workplace, and sacrifice of leisure time. Like many craftsmen, Sinan does not cross that line.

The dilemma of coworkers – the difficulty of cooperation – is a major reason many recalcitrant workers are unable to advance their resistance. Full of anger and criticism against employers, Fethi is a good example. To further their rights, workers must act collectively in numbers, requiring high levels of trust. Even a couple of spies among workers can undermine a large mobilization, and it is rare that these spies are outed. What is left behind is a cloud of suspicion and mistrust, summarized byt the saying, "you cannot trust anyone." Local cultural and historical circumstances matter, but they can only amplify the dilemma of cooperation, which is by definition "a thorny process, full of difficulty and ambiguity and often leading to destructive consequences."[122] Communication accidents, misunderstandings, caprices, competition, individual interests, and problems of collective decision making that abound in every human collectivity render tenuous the cooperation of workers necessary for resistance to emerge and persist. If these difficulties can be overcome, it would be on account of extensive social and emotional labor mostly invisible to outsiders including social scientists.

The dilemma of small workplace is the fourth dilemma I examined. The level of worker concentration is an important structural factor that conditions labor militancy. Small enterprises tend to have a social atmosphere that individualizes conflicts and reinforces paternalism and patriarchy as measures of labor regulation. Workers in such firms are further restricted by their higher

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122   Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation*, x.

level of expendability in a social setting where collective action is harder if not impossible. Furthermore, fierce competition forces many small enterprises to work for relatively low profit margins, rendering the firm itself unstable and unequipped to respond to worker demands. These are reasons why larger workplaces are more likely to encounter worker resistance, and why militancy among workers in small workplaces is tends to be moderate and defensive. As İbrahim's case exemplifies, resistance can emerge, but it is confined to moderate forms such as quitting a small workplace. Just like craftsmen, small workplaces were also expected to disappear, but they have not. Even in strongholds of capitalism, such as United Kingdom and Germany nearly, one in five employees works for such enterprises.

The last dilemma I investigate is the dilemma of morality: the hidden requirement of working-class struggle. Resistance has costs. Losing one's moderate satisfaction with work and giving up time and energy are simple ones, followed by retributions capitalists inflict upon workers, such as losing a promotion or losing a job. Resistance is always an uncertainty journey. The results are uncertain, but it is certain that conditions tend to worsen before they have the possibility of improving in the end. Acquiring better working conditions is in workers' interests, but struggling for them is most likely not. This is one of the reasons why interests by themselves do not explain resistance; moral commitments play a crucial role.

Since relations of exploitation and domination are not one-dimensional, but complicated and intersectional, workers tend to play out both sides of the power situation in their own lives, become alternately exploitative and exploited. This represents the internalizing of class conflict, the process by which the struggle among people leads to a moral struggle within each person. This is the second aspect of resistance that requires morality, entailing ideas about right and wrong, good and evil.

A moral understanding of injustice is necessary for resistance to emerge. Moreover, much emphasized processes of identity and group formation necessary for collective resistance to emerge are deeply moral processes. As noted by sociological studies on morality, social solidarity requires certain moral values – especially altruism – and working-class solidarity is no exception. Solidarity depends on some level of altruism, requiring both the will and behavior of undertaking actions that benefit other people.

As Mehmet summarized, workers are aware of the exploitative relations they experience, but they "think individually, not collectively. This is the source of the problem." For the emergence and advancement of collective resistance beyond common interests, at least some moral values are required. To emerge, resistance requires a spark of a morality that is different than the hegemonic bourgeois morality. Whether the movement will grow or diminish depends on the trajectory of this moral spark.

Bourdieu overly focuses on misrecognition. However, there are many members of the working class, whose misrecognition is less deep, but who still stay away from resistance mainly because of the demanding moral requirements of it. Bourdieu does not appreciate this fact for two reasons: he depicts humans as beings in Hobbesian pursuit of economic, cultural and social capital advantages. This conviction renders the morality insignificant or even simply a symptom of misrecognition. Second, Bourdieu does not explore resistance other than his short, political articles, and therefore lacks a theory of resistance, which ultimately obscures his analysis of compliance.

Together with the former, this chapter provides a broad and general picture of working class compliance and resistance based on my contacts and interactions with working class people of İkitelli. To capture such a varied and dynamic reality and to define a general outlook is difficult and tricky. It is never easy to evaluate just how prevalent an observed phenomenon really is. That said, from what I observed, lived, heard, and also intuited, I came to believe that – beyond the anonymous, low-profile resistance that exists as a fluctuating subjectivity – there are a few resisters or so-called "headstrong" workers, even among today's Turkish-Sunni working class in the grip of neoliberal conservatism. This is also a fluctuating subjectivity. Some give up in time, while others join in. It is impossible to estimate their number, but there is no question that they are few. Moreover, even fewer have both the intention and skill to spread their subjectivity and wage collective (rather than solo) struggle. I finish this chapter by raising two points related to this minority.

The first point is about a little recognized practical impact of this minority. The multitude of the working class is usually described as a weakness. As I pointed out while discussing the dilemma of coworkers, working class power lies in numbers, and because of this, divisions are destructive. I remarked the destruction even a few spies can bring about. Nevertheless, the multitude also

offers a little-recognized advantage. Even a few recalcitrant workers can "cause trouble" and leave a significant mark on employers, conditioning them to not exploit workers above a certain level. Formed by such occasional experiences of trouble, this attitude among employers and managers might survive even when there is no resistant worker in their workforce at a given time. I realized this point after seeing how a few workers skilled and lucky workers can stir up great troubles for employers, and after hearing employers overly complain about the cases of resistance they faced. But this is nothing to romanticize, since it is a purely defensive advantage for the working class. It cannot help workers to improve their conditions, only to keep what they already have.

The second point is theoretical and political. If taken seriously, the existence of such a minority should modify our main question about working-class resistance. Instead of asking why working-class resistance is so weak and how *it* can grow, the practical question should be how *resistant workers* in the field can spread their subjectivity and mobilize collective resistance. The first question calls for an anonymous subject, which is everywhere but nowhere. The question itself somehow confounds the answer, leaving the task at stake undefined. On the other hand, the second question makes manifest the subject and the task, namely to support these resistant workers. The significance lies in the image of the working class invoked by the first question: the general image of "the compliant working class." This image is instrumental for intellectuals. It overshadows the existence of the minority I have emphasized, allowing intellectuals to not feel bad about themselves for not struggling harder against the class system: after all, even those hit hardest by the system do not struggle. In this way, intellectuals peacefully postpone their responsibility for the next idealized, perfect upsurge of working class radicalism, which will most likely never come.

Silver among others reveals that no matter how it might look in particular corners of the world, the global working class has actually proved its capacity to improve its own conditions in the long run. To accomplish more than such partial improvements within the limits of capitalism, it was crucial – and always will be – that intellectuals participate in the struggle, in mobilizations, and the relevant organizations. We should leave the image of the anonymous compliant worker behind; it serves no real purpose other than legitimizing the passivity and cynicism of the producer and consumer of that image, whether

they be from the middle or working class. Beyond the vague image of the anonymous compliant worker, recalcitrant members of working class are waiting for supporters in the struggle they have already been waging.

6

Collective Resistance

In the previous chapters I scrutinize working class compliance and resistance with a broad view, including many varied forms observed in the field. For most of those cases of compliance and resistance, I relied on what people told me. Though I crosschecked the stories as much as possible, in many cases, I did not have the chance to observe the cases directly. Most of the cases were experienced in the past or were hidden, quotidian, or infant forms, which would be difficult to observe, anyway. The dilemmas I presented in the previous chapter were general dilemmas of working-class resistance at work, investigated mainly through such cases of hidden or infant forms of resistance. I left out the few collective cases of resistance in order to analyze them separately.

In this chapter I present several cases of open, collective working-class resistance, but focus on one in particular. All the cases are workplace based, local, mostly long-lasting collective mobilizations.[1] This form is required to

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1 There are broader forms of collective working-class resistance such as city, sector, or nation-wide mobilizations that may involve a political agenda. With its much larger scope, this type of mobilization has its own issues and dilemmas. As in many other countries, this type is rare in contemporary Turkey. Waves of wildcat strikes among metalworkers in May 2015 and the Tekel workers resistance of 2010 are two recent examples. For the Tekel case, see Türkmen, *Eylemden Öğrenmek - Tekel Direnişi Ve Sınıf Bilinci*. For mu own interview with Nuray Türkmen about this book see Alpkan Birelma, "Tekel Direnişi, Emek Mücadelesi Ve Mücadelenin

achieve even modest, local concessions from the capitalist class – as a wage raise or unionization. I present an interesting case that reveals the situation of working-class resistance in Turkey, and I scrutinize how the dilemmas uncovered in the previous chapter are experienced in the milieu of collective mobilization.

As I discuss in the previous chapter, the literature on working-class resistance is bifurcated. The first group is comprised of often local studies of working-class daily life and chiefly dominated by an uncompromising pessimism. The labor movement literature, generally biased by romanticism, is the second stream of thought that focuses on the analysis of collective resistance that has usually already emerged. While the first stream scrutinizes the ordinary state of working class subjectivity, the second concentrates on an extraordinary state, namely, subjectivities that emerge during working-class mobilizations, which are rare by definition. While the previous chapter falls into the first genre, this one is an example of the second. However, I propose a much-needed dialogue between the two genres.

The idiom of dilemmas will be the first medium of that dialogue. Workers in collective action experience the dilemmas of dependency, coworkers, and morality in slightly different and more complicated ways due to the extraordinary, complex milieu of the collective mobilization in which they are engaged.

The second medium of the dialogue concerns the timespan of the research on the case on which I focus in this chapter. I observed and participated in this still ongoing collective mobilization for more than five years, since its preparation period beginning in 2009. The initiator of the mobilization and a friend of mine, Mesut, was from İkitelli, as was his first recruit Osman. Over the years I observed the ups and downs of this interesting and long-lasting mobilization, which involved unexpected twists and developments. I had a privileged view of both mobilization and demobilization, resistance and compliance, and the revolutionizing and regressing of subjectivities. The case reveals the extraordinary and the ordinary together, and more importantly, oscillations between the two. I witnessed tremendous subjective

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Dönüştürücülüğü Üzerine Nuray Türkmen Ile Söyleşi," *Birikim*, no. 258 (2012). For metalworkers' wildcat strikes see Aziz Çelik, "The Wave of Strikes and Resistances of the Metal Workers of 2015 in Turkey," *Centre for Policy and Research on Turkey* IV, no. 10 (2015).

transformations; many people turned into activists in those years. Few keep on against all odds. Many gave up or lost their passion, some left the workplace, and a few became petty entrepreneurs. Moreover, in an unexpected but illuminating way, some leaders turned 'back' into bureaucrats[2] by the union leadership breaking with their friends. Turning into a working-class activist is one thing; staying there is another. Because of its focus on the moment of movement, the labor movement literature is ill-equipped for this distinction.

This particular case could be counted as successful in many ways. However, success is relative. In the following pages, I problematize success in two ways. First, as a point of methodology, I show how the moment in time the researcher leaves the field and conclude his story is crucial for interpreting the case as a success or failure. Conclusions drawn from a case depend heavily on the moment an observer leaves the field and makes overt or hidden prediction about the future.

Secondly, I scrutinize an under-examined dimension of success: how workers have changed subjectively due to their struggle? This question is vital because the labor movement needs more than just another unionized workplace, whose activists turn into bureaucrats and whose rank-and-file workers become concerned only with their own future rights and benefits. To speak about real success, at least some part of the body of newly organized workers should join in the labor *movement.* By joining the movement, I mean that they

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2   Neither bureaucracy nor bureaucrats are categorically corrupt or harmful. In this chapter, I use the term bureaucracy specifically as it is used within the labor movement literature. Among others, Hyman – as quoted by Darlington and Upchurch – makes the following formulation: "[B]ureaucracy within trade unionism is comprised of three sets of social relations: a separation of representation from mobilisation, a hierarchy of control and activism, and the detachment of formal mechanisms of policy and decision-making from the experience of members." Contrary to most radicals, I do not believe that the rank-and-file tend to be categorically more militant than union leaders, as will be clear by the end of this chapter. However, this does not change the fact that bureaucratization is a useful and effective term to define an observable tendency within unionism that is in tension with participation and mobilization. See Ralph Darlington and Martin Upchurch, "A Reappraisal of the Rank-and-File Versus Bureaucracy Debate," *Capital & Class* 36, no. 1 (2011): 79-80. For another trade union bureaucracy critique from a more central figure see, Bourdieu, *Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market 2*, 45.

should embrace some form of class-struggle subjectivity and practice it for a considerable time. Otherwise success means little more than the addition of a tiny group of workers into the "labor aristocracy,"[3] (a minority everywhere, but especially in the Global South) surrounded and separated from the ocean of insecure, low-paid, informal, and under/un/self-employed members of the working class. Scrutinizing this subjective dimension requires a long-term ethnography, which I had the chance to carry out.

§ 6.1   The Labor Movement Literature

The proliferating literature on labor movements and scholars from United States, where the "renewal" of the labor movement is claimed to be "more dramatic"[4] than elsewhere, leads this drive.[5] This literature is in dialogue with but distinct from traditional studies on labor unions that adopt a more institutional focus on the industrial relations paradigm, a literature more developed in Europe, but in decline.[6] The labor movement literature on which I build has been burgeoning since the 1990s in interaction with the social movement literature. It is distinct with its focus on movement, subjectivities, and action instead of institutions. In line with this bottom-up perspective, ethnography is widely used in this literature.

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3   Burawoy, "On Uncompromising Pessimism: Response to My Critics," 74.

4   Ronaldo Munck, *Globalization and Labour* (London: Zed Books, 2002), 191.

5   "The Public Turn from Labor Process to Labor Movement."; "The Global Turn: Lessons from Southern Labor Scholars and Their Labor Movements," *Work and Occupations* 36, no. 2 (2009); Jamie K McCallum, *Global Unions, Local Power: The New Spirit of Transnational Labor Organizing* (Cornell University Press, 2013), 159.

6   A scholar from the U.K., Kelly, made an argument to adopt mobilization theory from an industrial relations perspective based on more orthodox Marxism. However, this perspective has not been welcomed by British scholars who prefer greater emphasis on structural processes rather than agency and mobilization. For example, see Maurizio Atzeni, *Workplace Conflict: Mobilization and Solidarity in Argentina* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 15-20. Nevertheless, there are a few British scholars, such as Darlington, who defend and use mobilization theory, albeit with a less ethnographic flavor than American scholars. For Kelly's important work see Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves*.

In many areas of the world, new types of transnational[7] and/or local campaigns and mobilizations stemming from newly developing strategies[8] or improvised reactions[9] against neoliberal restructuring have opened a fresh space for contestation in recent decades. Many scholars accept this invitation and engage in studying and supporting the baby steps of the global working class to reclaim rights and dignity after long decades of defeats following the rise of neoliberalism. This literature can also be considered part of a broader debate about global justice against the tyranny of neoliberal marketization.[10] It is a dynamic and passionate field of study due to the political-ethical and elusive nature of the phenomenon under scrutiny.

7   Kate Bronfenbrenner, ed. *Global Unions: Challenging Transnational Capital through Cross-Border Campaigns* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007).

8   Milkman, *La Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the Us Labor Movement.*

9   Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*; Joel Beinin, "A Workers' Social Movement on the Margin of the Global Neoliberal Order, Egypt 2004–2009," in *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Joel Beinin and Frederic Vairel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Zia Rahman and Tom Langford, "Why Labour Unions Have Failed Bangladesh's Garment Workers," in *Labour in the Global South*, ed. Sarah Mosoetsa and Michelle Williams (Geneva: ILO, 2012), 101.

10   Ronaldo Munck, "Globalization and the Labour Movement: Challenges and Responses," *Global Labour Journal* 1, no. 2 (2010); Michael Burawoy, "From Polanyi to Pollyanna: The False Optimism of Global Labor Studies," ibid.; Ralph Armbruster-Sandoval, *Globalization and Cross-Border Labor Solidarity in the Americas: The Anti-Sweatshop Movement and the Struggle for Social Justice* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 153; Boaventura de Sousa Santos and César Rodríguez-Garavito, "Expanding the Economic Cânon and Searching for Alternatives to Neoliberal Globalization," in *Another Production Is Possible: Beyond the Capitalist Canon*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (London: Verso, 2006).

Transnational solidarity campaigns[11] and the successes of new local strategies in the 1990s,[12] the formation of SIGTUR,[13] Seattle 1999, and the first World Social Forum in 2001[14] followed the first tide of this phenomenon, and academic studies followed. However, in the aftermath of September 11 and the consequent winds of war and authoritarianism, some early successes of the transnational labor movement proved temporal. The so-called new transnational labor networks were not as effective as many expected them to be.[15] Some recently unionized factories in the South, prompted by transnational activism, were closed or moved,[16] while transnational effortsto improve the lower ends of the global supply chain proved futile.[17] Under these circumstances, some researchers recently began arguing that an overemphasis on the agenda of transnational labor activism might undermine more effective local strategies.[18] Anner contends that "transnationalism, without mobilization on the ground, would be unable to articulate sustainable demands at the factory

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11   Mark S Anner, *Solidarity Transformed: Labor Responses to Globalization and Crisis in Latin America* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), 59-61.

12   Milkman, *La Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the Us Labor Movement*; Stephen Lerner, "Global Corporations, Global Unions," *Contexts* 6, no. 3 (2007): 16-22; Meyer, "Perpetual Struggle: Sources of Working-Class Identity and Activism in Collective Action," 26-31.

13   Rob Lambert and Edward Webster, "Social Emancipation and the New Labor Internationalism: A Southern Perspective," in *Another Production Is Possible: Beyond the Capitalist Canon*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (London: Verso, 2006).

14   Munck, *Globalization and Labour*.

15   Peter Evans, "Is It Labor's Turn to Globalize? Twenty-First Century Opportunities and Strategic Responses," *Global Labour Journal* 1, no. 3 (2010): 364.

16   Armbruster-Sandoval, *Globalization and Cross-Border Labor Solidarity in the Americas: The Anti-Sweatshop Movement and the Struggle for Social Justice*, 153; Anner, *Solidarity Transformed: Labor Responses to Globalization and Crisis in Latin America*, 75.

17   Angela Hale and Jane Wills, *Threads of Labour: Garment Industry Supply Chains from the Workers' Perspective* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 236; Anner, *Solidarity Transformed: Labor Responses to Globalization and Crisis in Latin America*, 84.

18   Gay Seidman, "Transnational Labour Campaigns: Can the Logic of the Market Be Turned against Itself?," *Development and Change* 39, no. 6 (2008).

level."[19] Even Munck has become more cautious, stating that "the trend towards reconfiguring labour issues as human rights issues within a generic global civil society also seems to be running out of steam."[20] The optimism of the second half of the 1990s "slowly evaporated over time."[21]

The global financial crisis and waves of uprisings in different parts of the world again sparked expectations. The labor movement played a crucial role in popular revolutions to overthrow repressive regimes in Egypt and Tunusia.[22] Western labor movements led by Greece and followed by mass strikes across France, Spain, Italy, Belgium and Britain also forged considerable mobilization after the crisis in reaction to the attempt by global capital to shift the burden of the crisis onto workers.[23] However, this raising of expectations abated soon after.[24] For example, while Tunisian workers still have institutional power, the movement divided into two camps with destructive side effects, while in Egypt "all dissent has been violently suppressed."[25] In Europe, the crisis and austerity measures created even more unfavorable conditions for trade unions, whose varied attempts at revitalization are not yet bearing fruit.[26]

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19   Anner, *Solidarity Transformed: Labor Responses to Globalization and Crisis in Latin America*, 71-74. See also Gunawardana, "Struggle, Perseverance and Organization in Sri Lanka's Export Processing Zones," 96; McCallum, *Global Unions, Local Power: The New Spirit of Transnational Labor Organizing*, 2.

20   Munck, "Globalization and the Labour Movement: Challenges and Responses," 229.

21   Armbruster-Sandoval, *Globalization and Cross-Border Labor Solidarity in the Americas: The Anti-Sweatshop Movement and the Struggle for Social Justice*, 136.

22   Joel Beinin, *Workers and Thieves: Labor Movements and Popular Uprisings in Tunusia and Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

23   Ralph Darlington, "The Role of Trade Unions in Building Resistance: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Perspectives," in *Workers and Labour in a Globalised Capitalism*, ed. Maurizio Atzeni (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

24   Peter Waterman, "Beyond Polanyi and Pollyanna – Oscar Wilde?," *Global Labour Journal* 2, no. 1 (2011); Joel Beinin, "Egyptian Workers after June 30," in *Middle East Report Online* (2013).

25   *Workers and Thieves: Labor Movements and Popular Uprisings in Tunusia and Egypt*, 143.

26   Richard Hyman, Magdalena Bernaciak, and Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, *Trade Unions in Europe: Innovative Responses to Hard Times* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014).

For the United States, the paradigmatic case of the debate, Tilly points out the deteriorating impacts of the financial crisis on the labor movement.[27] Milkman remarks that once successful strategies of the SEIU and other progressive unions have become increasingly fruitless in the face of the updated employer opposition.[28] Others harshly criticize the SEIU for not improving working conditions of its new members and for being overly bureaucratic and non-democratic.[29] The proliferation of worker-centers in United States along with some of their recent achievements seem to indicate a possible revitalization for Milkman and others.[30] McCallum praises labor transnationalism with a detailed account of a transnational campaign carried out by the SEIU in the 2000s, which was "the most aggressive campaign ever waged by a Global Union Federation" against a transnational company.[31] However, he points out that the outcome of the campaign was "miniscule," at least from the perspective of the SEIU, so that it "has retreated from some of its prior commitments to global unionism."[32]

On the other hand, labor movements in some South American countries have diverged in the sense that they were not as severely hit by neoliberalism. In Brazil, where unions have played a key role in the victory of PT (Workers' Party) governments since 2002, is a vivid case holding a steady union density slightly lower than 30 percent since the 2000s.[33] Thanks to PT, the labor movement has enjoyed the expansion of available institutional mechanisms to defend its economic interests. As an impact of neoliberalism, Brazilian labor movement have embraced a collaborative stance and focused on economic

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27   Chris Tilly, "An Opportunity Not Taken... Yet: Us Labor and the Current Economic Crisis," *WorkingUSA* 14, no. 1 (2011).

28   Milkman, "Back to the Future? Us Labour in the New Gilded Age."

29   Sheila Cohen, "Workers Organising Workers: Grass-Roots Struggle as the Past and Future of Trade Union Renewal," in *Workers and Labour in a Globalized Capitalism*, ed. Maurizio Atzeni (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 151.

30   Ruth Milkman and Ed Ott, *New Labor in New York: Precarious Workers and the Future of the Labor Movement* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2014).

31   McCallum, *Global Unions, Local Power: The New Spirit of Transnational Labor Organizing*, 2.

32   Ibid., 8.

33   ILO, "Trade Union Membership Statistics," (2014).

demands with limited politically motivated demands and mobilizations.[34] Nonetheless, these are the problems of working class struggle at a different stage than most of the contemporary world. Although less divergent, Argentina is another case exhibiting relatively sustained power of labor. This power rests on mobilization, and Atzeni states that "traditional industrial conflict has to a certain extent changed its forms but overall the strength of working people's mobilizations has not decreased."[35] Drawing on these mobilizations, the Argentinean union movement has also recovered strength and political influence since the beginning of the 2000s.[36]

This brief overview of the literature reveals that some scholars project their own hopes onto the actors under scrutiny,[37] which leads them to present minor developments as strongly emergent tendencies.[38] Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that researchers are thinking and writing reactively against a cultural and political hegemony whereby labor and/or class struggle are seen as damned if not dead.[39] This context makes the common, exaggerated optimism more excusable: newly emerging struggles and partial victories indeed have greater marginal impact.

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34   Andréia Galvão, "The Brazilian Labor Movement under Pt Governments," *Latin American Perspectives* 41, no. 5 (2014).

35   Atzeni, *Workplace Conflict: Mobilization and Solidarity in Argentina*, 138.

36   Maurizio Atzeni and Pabo Ghigliani, "Unions' and Workers' Responses to Neoliberalism in Argentina," in *The International Handbook of Labour Unions*, ed. Gregor Gall, Adrian Wilkinson, and Richard Hurd (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011).

37   Michael Burawoy, "Ethnographic Fallacies: Reflections on Labour Studies in the Era of Market Fundamentalism," *Work, Employment & Society* 27, no. 3 (2013): 527.

38   For example see Lambert and Webster, "Social Emancipation and the New Labor Internationalism: A Southern Perspective," 291. For Munck's similar comment on Waterman see Munck, *Globalization and Labour*, 160.

39   For example see Lambert and Webster, "Social Emancipation and the New Labor Internationalism: A Southern Perspective," 315.

Evans states that institutional legacies might be "more important than the outcomes of individual campaigns."[40] There are indeed institutional developments: new, somewhat fruitful strategies,[41] newly emerged,[42] merged,[43] or restructured[44] transnational labor unions; and recently proliferating alternative worker organizations.[45] We might be witnessing a phase of "successful failures" since "every successful social movement is preceded by a long string of failures, but 'successful failures' can provide the basis for the next step in the

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40 Evans, "Is It Labor's Turn to Globalize? Twenty-First Century Opportunities and Strategic Responses," 260.

41 For "comprehensive-strategic campaigns" see Tom Jurawich, "Beating Global Capital," in *Global Unions: Challenging Transnational Capital through Cross-Border Campaigns*, ed. Kate Bronfenbrenner (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007). For "renegotiated Southern union participation in Transnational Activist Campaigns" see Anner, *Solidarity Transformed: Labor Responses to Globalization and Crisis in Latin America*, 71. For "industry wide campaigns" see ibid., 76 and 170. For "governance struggles" see McCallum, *Global Unions, Local Power: The New Spirit of Transnational Labor Organizing*, 3. For GFAs see M. Fichter et al., *Globalising Labour Relations - on Track with Framework Agreements?* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2012).

42 Like SIGTUR, see Lambert and Webster, "Social Emancipation and the New Labor Internationalism: A Southern Perspective."

43 For ITUC, see Evans, "Is It Labor's Turn to Globalize? Twenty-First Century Opportunities and Strategic Responses," 16. For "Workers Uniting" see Ronaldo Munck, "Unions, Globalization and Internationalism: Results and Prospects," in *The International Handbook of Labour Unions: Responses to Neo-Liberalism*, ed. Gregor Gall, Adrian Wilkinson, and Richard Hurd (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011), 299.

44 For GUFs, see Richard Croucher and Elizabeth Cotton, *Global Unions, Global Business* (London: Middlesex University Press, 2009), 6-15.

45 For the United States, see Milkman, "Back to the Future? Us Labour in the New Gilded Age." For South, see Hale and Wills, *Threads of Labour: Garment Industry Supply Chains from the Workers' Perspective*, 12; Gunawardana, "Struggle, Perseverance and Organization in Sri Lanka's Export Processing Zones."; Ching Kwan Lee and Yuan Shen, "China the Paradox and Possibility of a Public Sociology of Labor," *Work and Occupations* 36, no. 2 (2009); Birelma, "Türkiye'de Taşeron Çalışma."; Christian Zlolniski, "Economic Globalization and Changing Capital-Labor Relations in Baja California's Fresh-Produce Industry," in *The Anthopology of Labor Unions*, ed. Paul Durrenberger and Karaleah Reichart (Boulder: University Press of Colarado, 2010).

struggle," as Clawson hopes.[46] These are intuitive arguments pointing to a possibility, as no one has yet provided hard evidence of a clear upward trend of successes or even mobilizations.[47] Overall, cautiousness is more than necessary.

§ 6.2 Cases of Collective Mobilization

The case on which I focus in this chapter was not the only one encountered during my stay in İkitelli. I have observed six overt, collective worker mobilizations in recent years.

First was the unionization struggle in the nearby gum factory, Dandy, where many among nearly one thousand workers were from the neighborhood, including Mehmet, Nafız, Ferdi, Sultan and others I mention. As I note, even though workers achieved to unionization after a long and contentious struggle peaking in 2007, criticism emerged among many leaders of the mobilization about the union itself. After the mobilization broke management's resistance and the union became recognized, the union head demobilized workers, excluded them from decision-making, withheld information about the formal process, displayed suspicious behaviors, and repressed dissidents. The union head openly threatened Mehmet and his friends, among others, because of their independent activities.

Dissatisfaction grew so much that when the union signed the collective agreement in 2008 workers protested the agreement with a daylong wildcat strike. Meanwhile the factory was sold to another firm and gradually moved from Istanbul to Gebze. When the factory was finally closed in 2010, all workers had to quit, with the exception of a handful. Although there were some

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46   Dan Clawson, "'False'optimism: The Key to Historic Breakthroughs? A Response to Michael Burawoy's 'from Polanyi to Pollyanna: The False Optimism of Global Labour Studies'(Glj 1.2)," *Global Labour Journal* 1, no. 3 (2010): 400.

47   An important exception is China, where labor unrest has kept growing. See Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*; Ching Kwan Lee and Yonghong Zhang, "The Power of Instability: Unraveling the Microfoundations of Bargained Authoritarianism in China1," *American Journal of Sociology* 118, no. 6 (2013).

workers who praised the union head, the experience did not leave a particularly positive mark on participant workers overall. Besides the union's alleged corruption, the sudden closure of the factory reinforced their negative feelings. The closure, announced just eight months after the collective agreement, made clear to the workers the principal dilemma of working class resistance, namely, their utter dependence on the employer under the conditions of capitalism.[48]

There were three collective mobilizations in the of garment manufacturing sector that grew from similar dynamics. While one took place in a factory employing more than four hundred people, the other two were workshops with around fifty workers each. In all three cases, the employers had withheld some portion of wages over the previous months, and then suddenly announced bankruptcy. Under these circumstances workers mobilized, organized protests, and claimed their unpaid wages. They also tried to prevent the removal of machines and other valuable assets from their workplaces, either by the employers themselves or state officials or entrepreneurs to whom their employer was indebted. Both workshops were in the neighborhood, and the mobilizations took place 2009, the year global financial crisis hit Turkey. In both cases, workers occupied the workshops for several days to keep the machines there. The first case was prominent, because workers blocked a nearby main road for several hours, drawing attention of the press. Neither mobilization lasted more than a week, and they gradually vanished, although not without minor concessions to the workers.

The third case took place in 2012 in a factory called Hey Tekstil situated across the highway to the east of the neighborhood. This factory had downsized to a workforce of four hundred just before employers announced bankruptcy and closed down. The employers were a relatively famous family with political connections and other firms. Given the still large number of workers and the fact that socialist groups offered support, workers forged a stubborn mobilization lasting nearly six months. It involved protests not only in front of the factory, but in many places including the city center, government offices, the employers' house, and the offices and shops of several global brands for

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48   For a detailed account see Birelma, *Ekmek Ve Haysiyet Mücadelesi - Günümüz Türkiyesi'nde Üç İşç Hareketinin Etnografisi*, 81-152.

which they had produced. Similarly, mobilized workers did not gain all they aimed for, but won some concessions. The majority left the movement after half a year, though a minority kept striving for some time.

By slightly adjusting its meaning, we can use the term "protests of desperation" to describe these mobilizations because of their defensive, despairing nature in the face of collective dismissal. This contrasts the offensive and promising nature entailed by a mobilization aiming at the advancement of existing rights through unionization. Without downplaying the agency and moral conviction these mobilizations require, it is relatively easier for workers to sustain collective mobilization in the case of a plant closure. It is a specific moment when "stakes are the highest, solidarity the strongest, and opportunity cost the lowest."[49] To put it in other words, at the moment of closure and collective dismissal there is little to lose and much to gain.

The fifth case was of the first thype, namely the unionization struggle of a well-known, global package delivery company, UPS, which is based in the United States and is the largest in its sector in the world. UPS' hub on the European side of Istanbul was across the highway to the east of the neighborhood, close to Hey Tekstil. Although I knew several people working in the nearby hub of another delivery company, there was not one İkitelli resident among the nearly seven hundred workers employed in the UPS hub. The mobilization was the product of global campaign waged by the International Transport Worker Union (ITF) to unionize UPS plants in target countries. When the managers became aware of the organizing activities in 2010, they fired nearly two hundred unionized workers in the distribution centers throughout Turkey. One fourth of those were working in the plant near İkitelli. With the support of the local union and on international campaign, dismissed workers established a picket line in front of the hub together with other dismissed workers from two other hubs. On account of their determined struggle – but also due to support of UPS workers in different countries, particularly in the United States, management reinstated the dismissed workers at the beginning of 2011 and began respecting the right to organize. Not long afterward,

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49   Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*, 176.

the union organized the majority of workers, gained official recognition, and signed a collective contract.[50]

Beyond the less visible and less contentious forms of collective action discussed in the previous chapter, these struggles reveal that overt, contentious collective actions by workers, however rare, are present in İkitelli. What does this particular collection of cases suggest about collective mobilization in contemporary Turkey or around the globe in neoliberal times in general? It suggests that workers' chances to engage in overt, collective mobilization are higher under two specific conditions: first collective dismissal with unpaid wages and benefits due to alleged bankruptcy, and second relatively sizable firms. Firm should be large enough to grant sufficient power to mobilized workers and to attract attention of unions, as I discuss the dilemma of small workplace in the previous chapter from a different angle. In an ever more globalized economy, international solidarity is another important factor that plays a crucial role in the primary case on which this chapter we focuses.

It should be emphasized that even at their peak, these struggles, were not followed in the neighborhood and left no tangible impact on the community. Neighborhood residents neither actively supported nor focused any attention on these struggles. Mehmet, as a leader of the Dandy mobilization (the relatively most known and supported mobilization by the community) sadly commented: "A thousand people work in this factory, mostly from this neighborhood. We should have brought at least four thousand workers in front of the factory to protest the management. How could a man not bring three of his friends? But we couldn't manage it." Erdinç, a participant of Hey Tekstil, complained how even his close friends in the neighborhood could not understand what they were trying to achieve with the collective action. He had to "forcefully" bring friends to the picket line to make them see what they were doing. As I heard the popular, Thompsonian explanation for this epistemological rift numerous times from different mobilized workers: "They haven't lived through such a thing; that's probably why they don't understand."

50　For more information, especially about the international campaign see Molly McGrath and Demet Dinler, "Strategic Campaigning in Multinational Companies: The Case of United Parcel Service (Ups) in Turkey," *Juridikum*, no. 3 (2011).

Although there were exceptions, the workers involved in collective action had to deal with the indifference or even the avoidance of friends, relatives, and neighbors. The post-defeat working class culture of the social present perceives collective resistance as at best as alien, perhaps even as disturbing and harmful. A social burden awaits those who diverge from this culture; namely, the indifference or avoidance of one's community. The social isolation İkitelli dissidents experienced was their share of that burden.

§ 6.3 Introduction to Novac Case

The sixth case is the one on which I will focus on in this chapter. The stage for this case is a family-run garment manufacturer, Novac, which is a supplier for several transnational corporations (TNCs) and employed nearly 600 workers in 2009, when the mobilization began. The firm was founded in mid-1980s, as the garment sector was proliferating in Turkey along with neoliberalization. In the 2000s, it became a major supplier in high-quality knitwear.

In this five-and-a-half-years-long, ongoing struggle this group of workers has fo far gained an 8-hour workday, unionization, and a satisfactory collective contract in a sector where high informality, non-unionization, and a 12-hour workday were the norm. They inspired and supported a sector-wide wave of ongoing mobilizations, which have resulted in the introduction of an 8-hour workday in many other factories and workshops, as well as numerous unionization struggles, some ongoing. Victories were won through long-term, committed shop floor organization, exploitation of legal opportunities, and strategically applied transnational solidarity.

Among the collection of cases above, the Novac case stands in the middle of the two clusters: Novac is not as large as the gum factory or UPS. A workforce of six hundred does not automatically attract union attention. On the other hand, it is part of the same sector as the three protests of desperation I mention. The fact that the Novac case is a unionization struggle in a garment sector workplace with a midsized workforce is important to note.

In the last three decades, Turkey has become one of the world's top garment producers. While it was the thirty-ninth top exporter of clothing in 1980, it had become sixth by 2012, when it was making 3.4 percent of the world's

total garment exports.[51] These exports constituted nearly eleven percent of Turkey's whole export revenue in 2012, which made them the second most earning export industry after the automotive industry.[52] In 2010, the number of formal workers in the garment sector was 390 thousand, while the number for the textile sector was 356 thousands.[53] Together with informal workers, the total number of textile and garment workers in Turkey is estimated to be nearly 2.5 million,[54] which is slightly more than four percent of the world-wide workforce for these sectors, estimation to be 60 million.[55]

The boom in the Turkish garment sector took place at the expense of workers' underpaid labor, precarious employment relations, and poor and oppressive working conditions, all of which were reinforced by "lower cost subcontracting linkages between factory production and small workshop and home based production."[56] Novac was no exception. These conditions led a group of workers in the knitting machine department to mobilize. Except in a handful of Turkish firms, knitting machine operators generally worked 12 hours a day in two shifts, and six days a week.[57] In 2009, Novac's 40 knitting machine operators earned a monthly wage ranging from 560 to 620 dollars – all included –, amounting to 140 to 160 percent of the minimum wage. Compulsory overtime on Sundays was common, but the additional payment was just half of

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51 In 2012, the top five exporters were China, Hong Kong, Italy, Bangladesh, and Germany, respectively. Turkey is also seventh largest textile exporter. See World Trade Organization Statistics, accessed November 10, 2014, http://stat.wto.org/StatisticalProgram/WsdbExport.aspx?Language=E.

52 If we add the textile sector's exports, the total rises to sixteen percent. See Turkish Exporters Assembly, accessed September 12, 2014, http://www.tim.org.tr/tr/ihracat-ihracat-rakamlari-tablolar.html.

53 ÇSGB, *Labour Statistics 2010* (Ankara: Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı, 2011), 48.

54 Saniye Dedeoglu, "Patriarchy Reconsolidated; Women's Work in Three Global Commodity Chains of Turkey's Garment Industry," in *Gendered Commodity Chains: Seeing Women's Work and Households in Global Production*, ed. Wilma Dunaway (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 106.

55 ILO website, accessed November 10, 2014, http://www.ilo.org/global/industries-and-sectors/textiles-clothing-leather-footwear/lang--en/index.htm.

56 Dedeoglu, "Patriarchy Reconsolidated; Women's Work in Three Global Commodity Chains of Turkey's Garment Industry," 108.

57 On the books they appear to work only eight hours a day, as Turkish labor law and the codes of conduct of many brands mandate.

what an overtime payment should have been according to the labor law. On top of that, the foreman of the department had a distinctly humiliating and intimidating style of management, which workers particularly resented. Working conditions and earnings in other departments varied, but long hours and low payment was common. Compared to machine operators in other departments, knitting operators earned slightly less. Moreover, other departments had no night shifts, another troubling factor that knitting machine operators took for granted.

Table 6.1   The Mobilization in Novac: Overview.

	Round	Span in months	Date	Content
Phase 1	Preparation	12	Feb. 2009 - Jan. 2010	Emergence of workers' solidarity in the knitting dept. led by a worker leader.
	First period of organizing	8	Feb. - Sep. 2010	Formation of a core group of union organizers and recruitment of the majority in the department.
	First round: First contestation, first victory	1	Oct. 2010	Due to original collective action and threat of transnational campaign, workers of the dept. achieve raise and decrease of workday from 12 to 8 hours.
Phase 2	Post-Victory #1: Cold war and expansion	22	Nov. 2010 - Aug. 2012	Workers organize other departments of the factory and knitting machine operators in other factories.
	Second round: The picket line, second victory	3	Sep. 2012 - Dec. 2012	36 union-member knitting operators are dismissed and form a picket line in front of the factory. Mobilization for three months compels employer to reinstate 19 workers and promise not to hinder unionization.

	Round	Span in months	Date	Content
Phase 3	Recognition and collective agreement	12	Dec. 2012 - Dec. 2013	Despite resistance by management, union achieves recognition in eight months. After four-month bargaining process, satisfactory collective agreement is signed.
	Post-Victory #2: Rise of internal tensions	6	Jan. - June 2014	Union head promotes a demobilizing and bureaucratic unionism. Tensions among three external leaders (the union head, the union organizer, and the sacked leader worker) exacerbate tensions among workers.
	Open internal conflict and fragmentation	10	July 2014 - May 2015	Open conflict begins among workers divided more or less along lines of two competing union officers. Attempts to reestablish unity fail, while the conflict alienates many from mobilization.
Phase 4	A new union, a new hope?	6 (so far)	May 2015 -	Union head fires the union organizer, and the latter decides to build a new union. Most of the leading workers see this as an opportunity to break the deadlock. They participate in the formation of a new union.

Table 6.1 outlines the over six-year long struggle at Novac. The movement started, grew, and was led by workers in the knitting department which employed almost forty workers during the initial phase of mobilization, at the beginning of 2009. Led by an experienced, socialist worker, a group of knitting machine operators secretly organized to change working conditions in their department and have come a long way s'nce. I am friends with the leader and have been part of the mobilization since the end of 2009. It is appropriate to organize the six-year period into four phases.

The first phase concludes with the first round of the campaign. With an open collective action, workers won an unimaginable victory gaining rights largely absent in the whole subsector of knitting. After this victory, the second phase began with a cold war in which workers expanded their organization not only to other departments of the factory, but also – and more effectively – to knitting operators in other factories and workshops. The cold war turned into a second round of action when thirtysix unionized knitting operators were fired by the employer who could find no other way to stop union expansion. Knitting operators again led the way, but this time they were not alone. Many workers from other departments supported the picket line of the sacked knitting operators and mobilized their own departments. With the support of transnational solidarity workers won the second round too. Nineteen sacked workers were reinstated, and management promised not to hinder unionization. Despite some resistance by the employer, eight months after the reinstatement the union achieved a majority and formal recognition, which was followed by a satisfactory collective bargaining agreement.

Collective agreement opened a third phase, where disruptive trends gradually emerged among workers. Bureacratization, corruption, and ensuing fragmentation appeared and grew; leading workers came to a point of waging open conflict against one another. The movement had three external leaders with unequal and shifting spheres of influence who did not get along. Tensions among the union head, the union organizer (who was the actual union officer on the field), and the sacked worker, who initiated the mobilization in 2009, exacerbated tensions among other leader workers. Despite attempts to reestablish unity, two of three shop stewards eventually quit Novac due to the open, internal conflicts that also alienated many others. Meanwhile the tension between the union head and the union organizer intensified and the head fired the organizer.

This discouraging fragmentation and the ensuing pacification of the workers might about be to be counterbalanced by a fresh wave of mobilization. With the support of some workers from Novac and other factories, the sacked union officer founded a new, more militant, and more democratic union. This drive has led to a new wave of mobilization among Novac workers; and it will be unsurprising if this mobilization gains the support of the majority of Novac workers in the near future.

The significance of this case lies foremost in its long duration, gradual development, and ebbs and flows. It entails four modes of collective working class action:

1   First is open collective action aimed at gaining new rights led by workers with peripheral union involvement.
2   Second is collective action aimed at unionization led by the union.
3   Third is internal politics and conflicts in a post-victory, unionized workplace.
4   Last is an extraordinary collective action of building a new union.

In this rich, varied context, the case reveals the crucial dilemmas of collective working-class action. Since the research entails not only flows, but also ebbs in the action, it provides fertile ground for observing a crucial but much ignored aspect of struggle, namely the subjective outcomes of mobilizations: how they change participants subjectively, whether partipants forge new subjectivities or not, and under what conditions. Crucially, I explore if newly forged subjectivities survive or regress after moments of an uprising and victory.

Last but not least, the significance of the Novac case extends beyond Novac. On account of the collective efficacy Novac knitting operators felt after their victory in the first round, they have utilized their social networks to extend their mobilization to other factories. This sector-wide mobilization led to initiation of unionization struggles in nearly twenty other workplaces. These have not developed to the point of formal collective agreement. However, by invoking legal channels and transnational auditing, the sector-wide movement led to the introduction of an eight-hour shift system in tens of factories and workshops in place of the standard twelve hour one.

§ 6.4   The First Phase: Preparation, Organizing, and the Consequent First Round

Mesut is the worker who started and indisputably led the mobilization until he was dismissed during the first round of action. Even after that, he continued to guide and support Novac workers. More importantly, he ignited unioniza-

tion drives in the other factories in which he worked afterwards. As an experienced knitting operator in his early 50s, Mesut had been working in the sector since he was a teenager. I met him in 2005 when we happened to take the same municipal bus in Istanbul. He was reading a book of an author I like, while I was standing next to him in the typically full bus. I made a comment on the book, and we began a conversation that was the beginning of a long friendship.

Mesut is Alevi, a self-identified communist[58] without any organizational affiliation since the mid-1990s, and a family man, father of two children. Before, he had been a member of socialist Dev-Yol movement, one of the largest in the 1970s and known for its relatively less authoritarian internal politics. His understanding of communism is akin to anarcho-syndicalism, but since anarchism is a new and extremely weak phenomenon in Turkey, he identifies as a communist. One of the milestones in his life was the death of a three-year old daughter in an accident in 1999; however, he and his wife, Derya, moved on and brought two other children into the world in 2001 and 2006, respectively.

Mesut and Derya have lived in İkitelli since 2006, and he was one reason for choosing the neighborhood as my field. However, when I decided to restrict my research to Sunnis, he could not offer much help; he is embedded within the Alevi community of İkitelli. His Sunni friends were in Bayrampaşa, where he grew up, but as a newcomer to İkitelli and as a knitting operator working for twelve hours a day, six days a week, he had little time to socialize in İkitelli beyond his immediate network.

Mesut is a hard worker. Indeed, he was the one who made me realize and formulate the concept of the hard worker. Amplified by radical working-class politics, his pride in his labor, industriousness, and skills are great. His pride in and self-reliance about his labor is reinforced by a working-class radicalism that claims that workers do not need employers or managers to produce. He was proud of being "one of the best operators in Istanbul knitting market," as

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58   Darlington shows the ongoing roles of left-wing activists in collective workplace mobilizations in England. He argues that, contrary to the right-wing (media-induced) discourse, communist agitation by itself cannot explain working class mobilizations. However, many industrial relations academics have "gone too far and fallen into the alternative trap of neglecting the influence of politically influenced activists and shop stewards." See Ralph Darlington, "Agitator 'Theory' of Strikes Re-Evaluated," *Labor History* 47, no. 4 (2006): 485.

he was told by many of his employers and coworkers (occasions of which I witnessed firsthand). I spent nights with him in his various workplaces, when – before Novac – he worked in small workshops where it was no problem to have a visitor stay during the long night shift. I saw how fast and diligently he works, how his coworkers respect him due to his competence and knowledge. He once explained his work performance at Novac:

> I was of the few workers they relied on when there was an extraordinary situation. There were times when I took care of two tracks.[59] Friends told me: "Why are you doing this? Don't!" I told them that I would use it when the time comes. When they began to put pressure on me for the organizing, I used it a lot. I could challenge them in a much more confident way. I said to them, you aren't punishing me because of the work I do, you are doing this because I demand justice, no other reason.

He once tried to unionize in a knitting factory where he worked at the end of the 1990s; he failed and afterwards worked in small workshops that were inappropriate for unionization. When he began working in Novac in 2008, he gradually developed the idea to organize. Since we were friends and I had an experience as a labor activist, Mesut called me in, and I supported the struggle both in terms of grassroots organizing and solidarity building with various local and international NGOs. After I realized that the struggle was developing and worth studying, I turned my presence into one of an ethnographer. Besides field notes, I conducted individual and group interviews along the way.

As the only Alevi and left-leaning worker in the department, Mesut's task was far from easy. When he first began working at Novac, he told me that social relations in the department were "very weird" in the sense that workers mostly acted in selfish ways and commonly spied on one another. But a young worker in his 20s, Osman, slowly became a friend and gave him motivation to organize.

Osman is a pious Sunni, a father of one child, and a member of the Islamist Felicity Party from which the governing party broke in 2002. In the 1990s,

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59 A knitting operator normally takes care of one track of machines, which meant four machines in Novac at that time.

Islamism had its own anti-systemic, egalitarian tendencies and the Felicity Party was its main party of Islamism at that time. Although he had never encountered working class discourse or the idea of unionization, Osman was inclined to this semi-left version of Islamism and soon became impressed by Mesut's discourse. The fact that Osman lived also in İkitelli, in the Ziya Gökalp neighborhood north of the highway, served as a common ground. In terms of the meaning he attributes to his work, Osman is a detached survivor: neither proud of nor despising about his job. He does not like working in general, a comment about Osman I heard on many occasions from coworkers and his brothers. I witnessed his coworkers teasing him several times because he took short naps during work hours. This disposition of Osman would pave the way for a mistake he would make in the third phase of the mobilization.

At this stage of their relationship, Mesut talked neither about politics nor religion. He was expressing ideas about their common daily problems, the importance of solidarity and helping one another, and that they could change their conditions if they relied on themselves and one another. One of Mesut's oft emphasized mottos was: "When we wear this apron,[60] our differences of language, religion, and sect disappear. We all get the same treatment from management. They don't pay you more because you are Sunni."

Osman introduced Mesut to his older brother and his brother's approval encouraged Osman to get closer with Mesut. Osman talks about the preparation period right after their first victory:

> We used to chat a lot with Mesut. He would talk and we would listen. The things he told us sounded so fanciful to me, so impossible at the time. I was thinking, "This guy is amazing!" He used to say that we could change the factory; we could have a eight hour workday if only we relied on each other and all that. I still cannot believe we did it! We achieved what he was talking about, what he made us dream about. We made the workday eight hours!

What convinced Osman and later others was not only his words but his deeds, namely the way that Mesut worked and behaved, how he helped others, shared his food, and the way he turned food sharing into a common practice. As

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60   He means the apron they have to wear while working.

Mesut recalls in his first year at Novac, he worked hard to accepted and to show people "sharing, friendship, and fellowship." Osman's fellowship and trust was crucial for him to cross the social barriers of sect and ideology. In fact, what Mesut, Osman, and others were doing in this period was building solidarity among workers, which "rests on a foundation of mutual protection, friendships, shared meanings, and shared norms."[61] He was trying to create group cohesion (which is "a fundamental precondition" for solidarity) and a group norm of generosity, these being two of four behavioral facets of solidarity framed by Hodson.[62] Solidarity would be established on the shop floor through activities like "cooperative, group-building practices, grievance sharing within work units," which would "alter employee perceptions of the workplace, fairness, and justice."[63] As a more active and risky facet of solidarity, mutual defense would emerge afterwards, on top of that cohesion. And as the last facet, leadership consolidated around Mesut at a time it was most needed, that is in the first round of collective action.[64]

As should be clear by now, this mobilization started from below, by workers themselves, and was moreover led by them through its first victory. When Mesut and Osman realized that workers' solidarity in their department had reached a certain level, they decided to organize a union with the aim of changing working conditions in their department. Their goal was not to unionize the whole factory, which seemed unimaginable at the time. They simply wanted to get the support of an outside union for the actions they planned to do to improve their conditions in their department.

After some research, they settled on organizing in a branch of the TEKSİF union.[65] TEKSİF was an established union in the textile and garment sectors, but had no presence in the knitting sector. The organizing efforts were de facto

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61   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 206.

62   Ibid., 207-08. See also Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*, 92.

63   Dixon, Roscigno, and Hodson, "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," 9.

64   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 208.

65   I played an important role in this decision. Because of my contacts in different unions, I led our visits to different unions in the sector together with Mesut and Osman, and we decided upon TEKSİF.

led by a union officer, Serkan, who was upright, assiduous, and creative, a pre-cious combination rarely found in the Turkish union movement. At that time, he had recently concluded the unionization of a factory and was in the final stages of bargaining in another. In both victorious cases, he crucially took ad-vantage of transnational opportunities. By Turkish standards, he was more than usually involved in transnational networks, namely global union, the au-diting agencies, and worker solidarity NGOs. Serkan's drawback was his ea-gerness to have complete control over the process. This trait caused tensions from time to time, especially with Mesut. In the first period of organizing, Serkan supported the workers in a hands-off way letting Mesut lead the pro-cess. Serkan impressively took the lead in the second round of collective action and greatly shaped in the victory in the second phase.

TEKSİF is a part of the TÜRK-İŞ confederation, which is generally known for bureaucratism, cooptation, and corruption, although there are exceptional unions within it. TEKSİF is not one of those exceptions. The reason Mesut, Osman, and I chose TEKSİF was that there was no better union in the garment and textile sectors; the allegedly left-leaning union tied to the DİSK confeder-ation was perhaps even more corrupt.[66] Second, Serkan's reputation and re-cent successes were reassuring. Nonetheless, we were aware of the institutional problems of TEKSİF beyond Serkan's sphere of influence. This risk was nec-essary. At the time the realization of that risk seemed far away, a distant future, and we knew that Serkan was in charge of the process of organizing. However, after the union wins recognition and collective bargaining begins, Serkan leaves the floor to the union branch head, who was not particularly promising.

The third person Mesut and Osman included in the unionization drive at this earlystage was Selami, a middle-aged veteran knitting operator in his fif-ties. Selami is a pious Sunni and a social person, known for his friendliness and naivety, the latter of which lead to friendly teasing. He had positive rela-tions with many of the department workers both because of his sociability and

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66   DİSK and TÜRK-İŞ are loose confederations, and each of their unions is almost independent. Though in the 1970s it was safe to state that DİSK unions tended to be more militant and dependable than TÜRK-İŞ unions, this distinction is not so clear since the reopening of DİSK in 1992 after being banned in the 1980 coup. Nonetheless, for a DİSK union to be more corrupt than a TÜRK-İŞ union would still be surprising and exceptional.

because he had worked with many of them in other factories. With his social skills, naivety, and passion for the idea of finally getting rid of the unbearable conditions and intimidation in the shop, Selami turned into an organizing machine. By far he personally convinced and took the majority of workers in the departmen to the union office. Afterwards he would frame his own transformation as "being done with vegetating."

These three men formed the core of the mobilization and for security, recruits did not know who else had been recruited except the person who convinced them. The trio constituted the leadership facet of worker solidarity and formed the basis of the upcoming mobilization in the "micro-mobilization context," that is, small group settings "in which processes of collective attribution are combined with rudimentary forms of organization to produce mobilization for collective action."[67] Over the next eight months, they sustained "a high degree of group cohesion, to urge the appropriateness of one or more forms of collective action"[68] and reinforced that cohesion with daily mutual defense[69] on the shop floor. As a result, the foreman began complaining that workers had stopped coming to him to snitch on one another, a practice, that had been common before. As Mesut often emphasized, the workers of the department who used to think as "I," came to think as "we" thanks to the efforts of the three leaders and others who later joined the crusade.

Even in this early stage, the mobilization availed itself of transnational networks. Mesut learned about these networks from Serkan and with my assistance he got in touch with the Clean Cloths Campaign (CCC). Novac's primary customer is a transnational company I will call "Konda." A CCC activist from Konda's country of origin met with a group of Novac workers when she visited Turkey. The meeting itself had a significant, positive impact on workers. It surprised them and contributed to the development of their collective self-confidence. Later, CCC would send a letter of protest to Konda and provoked an investigative article about Novac and its relation to Konda in an eminent, national newspaper in Konda's home country.

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67   Doug McAdam, "Micromobilization Contexts and Recruitment to Activism," *International Social Movement Research* 1, no. 1 (1988): 135.

68   Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves*, 127.

69   Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 207.

After eight months of their drive for unionization, they had recruited twentyfive of thirtyeight workers in the department and felt it was time to take creative, collective action. They notified management that they wanted to work no more than the law dictates, namely 45 hours of work in a week. This meant that any excess work would count as overtime, which in practice would lead to a significant raise. The crucial step was that they did not sign their payroll slips, which show amounts less than they actually earn. The management would to show lower wages on the books to lower the employer contribution to workers' social security. Workers exploited this illegal practice by refusing to sign the slips and not accepting the informal portion of their wages over the amount on the books. In this way, they insured that they could apply to the ministry of finance to make a complaint about the practice. In reaction, management fired four workers, including Mesut. This led Serkan, the union representative, to engage with management for the first time. Moreover, workers took the further step of starting to leave the workplace after 8 hours of work. Faced with workers' determination and the union's threats to start a transnational campaign, management unexpectedly declared that workers would work only 8 hours a day with a twenty percent increase in wages.

The employer was uncompromising about the reinstatement of the four dismissed workers. In the four long days between the dismissal of the workers and the victory, the dismissed workers had received their severance pay and signed documents about their termination. They practivally signed away their right to legally challenge their dismissal, which gave management a strong hand on the issue of reinstatement. This was Mesut's mistake, as he later admitted. It stemmed from the financial distress with which he was dealing in that period, on the one hand, and the momentary disappointment with his coworkers' lack of determination to fight for his reinstatement, on the other. This fact was an imperction on the face of the victory.

§ 6.5 The Second Phase: The Cold War and the Consequent Second Round

This once unimaginable victory did not lead the knitting department workers to retreat, self-satisfied from their mobilization. Rather, they sustained their

solidarity and strove to organize other departments in the factory as well as knitting operators in other factories. They continuously worked to maintain their own solidarity, first because management made different moves to break their solidarity, and because they had new coworkers (the eight-hour shift required new people to fill the newly introduced third shift).

Meanwhile, Mesut began organizing in the new factory where he started to work soon after his dismissal. Many among Novac's workers supported Mesut's new drive and contacted friends in other factories to inform them about their experience and invite them to the union. On the other hand, many knitting operators from other factories got in touch with workers they knew at Novac on their own to learn about the mobilization and follow in its steps.

Novac's knitting operators had a harder time reaching Novac workers in other departments. This was because management's maneuvers, cultural barriers (related to gender and craft), and structural problems of workers in particular departments (such as the ironing-packaging department) that rendered them disposable and hesitant to mobilize. However, the drive continued and slowly acquired new recruits. Soon after they won their first victory, the much-despised foreman gave them a clear message: "A boss will never forget what you have done." Indeed, he did not. Management waged a cold war against the unionized workers, and twenty-two months later it warmed up.

Nonetheless, twenty-two months was not a short period. The enthusiasm and idealism had slowly faded away, and in the last six months of that period, the mobilization seemed from time to time to have lost its momentum. Around fifteen Novac-inspired mobilizations in other workplaces achieved the introduction of an eight-hour shift, a true success. However, management tactics of repression and appeasement prevented any of those mobilizations from developing into full-scale unionization campaigns.

The outlook for the unionization campaign at Novac was not particularly hopeful, either. The knitting operators had a hard time convincing workers of other departments to unionize, and were stuck with few recruits from other departments. They were unable to push further. The mobilization at Novac seemed to be a version of a classic story: a group of workers struggle and improve conditions for themselves, after which they become unable or unwilling to struggle to better conditions for others. This is the familiar story of the making of a labor aristocracy, or to be more analytic, the making of a group of

labor aristocrats, who only care about their own conditions and problems. While the story might have ended with this conclusion, the course of events changed.

6.5.1   *The Second Round: The Picket Line*

After many failed attempts to contain the unionized knitting operators, Novac's management made a bold move twenty-two months after the initial victory. Management unilaterally imposed a new organization of production in the knitting department requiring workers to operate two additional knitting machines, while normally they had operated only four. These additional machines would increase workload by fifty percent, and workers perceived this move as a conscious, insidious plan to dispense with them. Since it would be difficult to deal with six machines at once, they would inevitably make mistakes and be subjected to official warnings, three of which would lead to being laid off without severance pay. On the other hand, as they all had different capacities and skills, workers would encounter these warnings in different times. The problem would be individualized leading to them being hunted one by one.

Thirty-six of the knitting operators resisted by refusing to operate additional machines. Not all were among the participants of the first mobilization nearly two years before. Most were relatively new workers who were employed after the first round. Management made a move against this selective strike: it sacked all thirty-six workers without severance pay. This attack by the employer served "as a fire that tempered the steel of solidarity." As Fantasia observes,

> … the militancy of employers was not just a barrier to be surmounted
> in forming cultures of solidarity, but to a considerable degree served
> as the source of solidarity.[70]

This move by management might be perceived as a risky but rational strategy to prevent unionization from growing within the plant. However, as I mention above, the unionization drive was already more or less contained. Researchers

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70   Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*, 233.

should not underestimate irrational, emotional motivations for workers and employers alike. The emotional motivation of revenge seemed to play a role in this move by Novac's management, which was difficult to explain rationally.

The mass dismissal prompted the second round of collective action, which would last for three months and involve an intense, full-time mobilization on behalf of the thirty-six sacked workers and others. Unlike in the first phase, the union officer, Serkan, took the lead and decisively directed the process. Although he discussed major decisions with workers, he was careful to maintain overall control. He believed that he bore the burden of the jobs and subsistence of all the participanting workers, which demanded him to be in control of the process and not make any mistakes in the complicated battle. As expected, his leadership style caused discontent among some workers, but these did not turn into an open contestation. However, he made mistakes in this phase and afterwards, which play a part in the subsequent rise of internal conflicts.

Under Serkan's lead, the sacked workers immediately formed a picket line in front of the factory, which would be their base of operations for the next three months. Their strategy had three facets. First, they struggled to recruit more union members in the factory. Second, they intensified efforts to expand subsector-wide mobilization. But the most crucial facet was the transnational aspect of their strategy: with Serkan's expertise, they launched a shrewd transnational campaign targeting the multi-national company, Konda, which was Novac's primary customer. The global union federation (GUF) IndustriALL immediately became involved and led the transnational aspect of the campaign contacting and later conducting negotiations with Konda.[71] As Croucher and Cotton underline "dialogue with central management in international companies is a significant, identifiable service that GUFs can offer affiliates."[72]

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71   Cooperation was facilitated by the fact that a Turkish unionist, Kemal Özkan became assistant general secretary of Industriall, with which Serkan had a relationship. Özkan came from Geneva several times to visit the picket line several times.

72   Croucher and Cotton, *Global Unions, Global Business*, 15.

In the 1990s the international activities of Turkish unions diminished even compared to the 1980s.[73] Parallel with a global trend – although belated – the 2000s witnessed an increase in the involvement of global union federations in local conflicts in Turkey, especially for campaigns organizing within multinational companies or their suppliers.[74] In countries like Turkey, where domestic political opportunities are limited, labor movements tend to apply transnational strategies more often.[75] Dinler discusses ten recent transnational cases from Turkey and reports that four were successfully concluded[76], two are continuing, while the rest were lost.[77] The lost case of the Novamed factory drew broad attention due to its primarily female workforce and the involvement of the feminist movement.[78] In research on seven workplaces run by or supplying

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73 Ulf Asp, "The Trade Union Situation in Turkey–an Analysis," *South-East Europe Review* 3 (2002): 136.

74 Demet Dinler, *Country Trade Union Report: Turkey* (Istanbul: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012), 13. For similar observations, see Emre Eren Korkmaz, "Globalization, Global Labor Movement and Transnational Solidarity Campaigns - a Comparative Analysis of Three Solidarity Campaigns in Turkey" (Sabancı University, 2013), 67.

75 Anner, *Solidarity Transformed: Labor Responses to Globalization and Crisis in Latin America*, 176.

76 These four cases are as follows: UPS (a United States global delivery company), Praktiker (a German home product retail company), Standard Profil (a global-operating automotive sealant systems manufacturer) and Tesco (British retail company). In the case of Tesco, the organization and collective bargaining agreement was finalized after Dinler published her report.

77 The UPS case I mentioned above is one example. The Global Union Federation prodded the UPS mobilization by energizing the local Turkish union. See McGrath and Dinler, "Strategic Campaigning in Multinational Companies: The Case of United Parcel Service (UPS) in Turkey."

78 Feryal Saygılı, "Kadın Emeği: Antalya Serbest Bölge'den Novamed Örneği," in *Hacıyatmazı Devirmek: Neoliberal Pratiklere Karşı Kolektivite*, ed. Yıldırım Şentürk and Sibel Yardımcı (Istanbul: Kalkedon Yayınları, 2010); Taylan Acar, "Linking Theories of Framing and Collective Identity Formation: Women's Organizations' Involvement with the Supramed Strike," *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey*, no. 11 (2010); Tore Fougner and Ayça Kurtoğlu, "Transnational Labour Solidarity and Social Movement Unionism: Insights from and Beyond a Women Workers' Strike in Turkey," *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 49, no. 2 (2011).

to multinational corporations, Fichter, Sayim and Berber found that local unions were striving for unionization through initiating global campaigns in close cooperation with GUFs in three non-unionized workplaces. The case of Novac should be contextualized within this effort to revitalize the Turkish labor movement through internationalization.

Konda is a leading firm in premium and luxury apparels and one of the most profitable apparel manufacturers in the world.[79] It is based in Europe and its annual sales exceeded two billion euros in 2012, some 0.17 percent of the global apparel, accessories, and luxury goods market value.[80] Konda is among the top twenty players in the global textiles and apparel industry. Only twenty percent of its production is manufactured in its own production sites, which are located in three European countries, Turkey, and the United States. Nearly 350 suppliers supply for Konda as contract manufacturers or merchandisers and manufacture the majority of its products. In terms of value of production, almost half of Konda's products are manufactured in Eastern Europe and Turkey, while nearly a quarter is manufactured in Asia, and the rest is produced in Western Europe, North Africa, and America. The company declares that suppliers are required to "strictly comply" with internationally recognized social and labor standards in accordance with the Conventions of the ILO. Their contracts with suppliers contain provisions for minimum pay and maximum working hours. Konda's website declares that suppliers are monitored through regular social compliance audits performed by Konda's own and external service providers.

Konda was known for being relatively insensitive to labor issues compared to some other transnational corporation, as Clean Cloths Campaign activists informed me during the campaign. This statement was consistent with union officer Serkan's own experience. Since 2008, his union had two other ongoing contestations with Konda, the first in Konda's own factory and the second in

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79   The information about Novac was gathered from its own website.

80   For data about global market value, see Marketline, *Industry Profile: Global Apparel, Accessories and Luxury Goods* (London: Marketline, 2012), 11. To make sense of Konda's share in the global apparel, accessories and luxury goods market, it is meaningful to mention the share of its largest player, Wal Mart, which is 1.5 percent.

the factory of another supplier. Serkan was personally involved in both campaigns and in both cases noted that Konda embraced a strict anti-union stance, even affirmed by court decisions.[81] With the support of the global union, the local union tried to contact and bring Konda around, but did exceed. For Serkan, the mass dismissal at Novac was a part of the union's broader struggle with Konda being fought on three fronts. On the other hand, one month later, Serkan decided to focus on just the Novac case in negotiations with Konda.

As early as the day after their dismissal, Serkan led workers to take a transnational action: a march in Taksim in the center of Istanbul, that ended in front of the consulate of Konda's country of origin. They demanded to talk with an officer of the consulate about the issue. After half an hour of protest and chanting in front of the consulate under the protection of riot police, an officer agreed to talk with Serkan and a worker. This was only the beginning. Besides daily routines in front of the factory, protesting the employer and organizing workers of the factory, the thirty-six sacked workers protested in many points throughout the city: in front of the employer's house, in Taksim square, at a chamber of commerce established between Turkey and Konda's home country, in front of a skyscraper that headquarters another brand for which Novac supplies, at the main office of the Ministry of Labor in Istanbul, and at other factories where knitting workers' unionization was being hampered by employer resistance. They even organized simultaneous fairs in three different locations one weekend to advertise the resistance and gather financial support by selling homemade food.

6.5.2 *Subjective Transformations*

The three-month-long picket line was obviously extraordinary for Konda workers, but especially for thirty-six who had been fired. Due to their initial success and the ensuing worker solidarity in the knitting department, they

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81 In both cases, some workers who were fired due to union membership filed lawsuits, and the court agreed that they were fired because of their union involvement. In the case of Konda's supplier, the union filed also a different lawsuit, the outcome of which was that the court found the human resource manager and six foremen guilty of forcing workers to resign from union. This is a rare decision requiring hard evidence.

were familiar with the requirements of solidarity and collective struggle. However, being collectively fired, turning into full-time union activists, and making numerous protests outside the factory were new experiences for them. With the guidance of Serkan, the sacked workers appointed a leadership committee, which Osman, Selami, Mecnun and Nuri joined.

Mecnun was one of the workers despised by others because they perceived him as an "adulator" of the foreman. When Mesut first called me to see the factory and meet Osman in 2009, I went to a nearby location where Mesut told me to wait. When we met, they suddenly they saw another worker from factory across the street, who disturbed them, because he was one of the "men of the foreman." He would undoubtedly inform the foreman next day that Mesut and Osman had met a suspicious guy outside of the factory. Even though normally there was nothing to worry about, he would present the scene in an exaggerated way to ingratiate himself with the foreman. The man did just what Mesut and Osman feared; however, Mesut evaded the foreman's interrogation.

This "adulator" was Mecnun, and he later admitted he really was "something like that." He was an enemy of unionization, mostly because of his family's dire economic conditions, which made dependent on every bits of overtime. He was so desperate that he invested some of his precious savings in a popular, transnational Ponzi scheme, that took advantage of the desperate among the working class. When the scheme was finally banned by the state, Mecnun lost all of his money. He was shocked. But the experience made him respect Mesut, who had been stolidly opposed to the Ponzi scheme claiming that it was neither moral nor worthwhile. This respect, plus his desire to improve his tiresome conditions of the workplace turned Mecnun into a prominent advocate of first phase of the mobilization. He played a critical role in the second phase, becaming the second man to Osman, who undertook the leadership role after Mesut's dismissal. Osman and Mecnun made a good couple, while Osman being the good and Mecnun the bad cop, as Mecnun is a tough guy who you would not mess with. However, his temper would cause trouble in his relations with coworkers, rendering him not particularly popular.

Nuri was also an unexpected leader. He was the neighborhood representative of the conservative governing party, and had never been involved in union activity, like the majority of the knitting operators at Novac. He was opposed

to and actually afraid of the unions due to his prejudice that they are leftist and "anarchist." Nuri – in his own words – "got goose bumps," when he first heard of the union efforts on Novac shop floor. He "quivered with fear" on the way to the union office after giving up his resistance at the insistence of a buddy. Crucially, thanks to his self-reliance, social skills, and a somehow middle-class habitus, he had good personal relations with not only with the foreman but even with a couple managers in the factory. The latter fact was one of the reasons Mesut never trusted him, even though he had participated in the mobilization from the first phase. Nuri had a large amount of mortgage debt from credit he took out in 2009. When he contracted Hepatit B in 2012 and had to undertake a costly treatment, his coworkers supported him financially, just one such gesture of solidarity that Novac workers have practiced often since the emergence of the mobilization. During the three months of the picket line, he turned into a leader and put in a lot of effort. Despite his debt, he did not choose to take the tempting severance pay and leave. On the contrary, he stayed and became a leader of the struggle, which was inspiring and motivational gesture for the other fired workers.

There were also a few others among sacked workers who distinguished themselves with their effort and emerged as leaders, such as Salih and Hakan. Salih was crucial for organizing women workers in other departments, particularly as his wife used to work at Novac and provided all of her contacts. Hakan was an enthusiastic, emotional, and sometimes childish man who was passionate about doing whatever was necessary for the struggle. In the meantime, dormant but potential union activists in various departments of the Novac factory became active and did their best to mobilize support in their departments for the sacked workers and the union. With the lead of these active supporters, many workers visited their coworkers in the picket line both before and after their shifts and during the breaks to bolster morale and discuss strategy.

6.5.3 *Workers' Victory*

Novac's management made numerous moves to restrict mobilization: it offered a considerable amount of severance pay to the sacked workers; it inten-

sified surveillance within the factory; it threatened workers who openly supported their sacked coworkers; it announced a high wage increase of seventeen percent to appease dissident workers; it hired a high profile, expensive international law firm to argue against the union with regard to the negotiation process established between IndustriALL and Konda. A critical move came on the fiftieth day of the picket line. That morning, when sacked workers came to the front of the factory to set up their picket line, they were met by nearly three hundred riot police and two armored vehicles. Police did not let them form their line where they had been doing it, in front of the factory. Workers tried to pass the police barrier, but were beaten back. Hakan fainted during the tussle. They had to form the picket line a block away from the factory. After a few days it became clear that the police had come due to the employer's personal relations with some politicians. But the move backfired, causing an intensification of the transnational campaign. The Clean Cloths Campaign once again became involved and contacted Konda to protest the situation. The International Labor Rights Forum was also informed about the situation, and its officers immediately got in touch with Konda to pressure them.

Within three weeks after the police attack, negotiations were concluded and nineteen of the workers were reinstated. At an early stage, twelve of thirty-six workers had told Serkan that they wished to receive their severance pay and leave rather than be reinstated. They continued the struggle only to support their friends. In the final weeks, others declared the same. The union was actually arguing for the reinstatement of nearly twenty-two workers. On the last day when more generous amount of severance pay offer was announced, two more made the decision to leave, while one last worker left the factory unwillingly. In addition to the reinstatements, Novac management declared that it would no longer hinder unionization.

This was a great victory won by the massive efforts of the previous three months. Unsurprisingly, Novac management did not strictly abide by its promise and continued to resist, although in more discrete ways. During this period management did not interfere in the knitting department, but put pressure on workers in other departments. Therefore, the focus of the struggle became decentered to other departments, which led to the emergence of new leaders, especially among women.

Management's most effective maneuver was an attempt to sell the majority of the company's shares to an investor, claiming that the company was in financial trouble. This development worried workers and delayed the final unionization process. But soon after, it became clear that this attempt was disingenuous; the sale never happened and eight months after workers were reinstated, the union had a majority and concluded the official recognition process. Osman became the chief shop steward. After a bargaining process lasting four months, a satisfactory collective contract was signed at the end of 2013, which raised wages ten percent on average and furthered the workers' social rights and benefits.

As mentioned above, the significance of this mobilization is beyond the improvements obtained in the Novac factory. It created a sector-wide wave of struggle, initiated and actively supported by Novac workers. The most tangible impact of this wave has been the introduction of an eight-hour workday in many factories and workshops in Istanbul due to a combination of shop floor organizing, forcing the application of national laws and regulations, and strategically applied transnational tactics. On the other hand, most of the numerous unionization struggles inspired and supported by Novac workers lost momentum for various reasons, including the inadequacies of the union and the mobilized workers themselves. Nonetheless, an unexpected revival of sector-wide mobilization was about to emerge in 2015, a development I explain regard to the fourth phase.

A last point about the second phase, which concluded with a collective agreement, concerns one of the problems that haunt success. Studies emphasize that the excess of a mobilization might lead to the closure or replacement of a factory. This is especially true in the garment industry, which is very flexible due to low entry and removal costs.[82] Therefore, short-term success might turn into "long-term failure."[83] The point is not about the potential bankruptcy of a unionized garment firm unable to survive in a highly competitive,

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[82] Anner, *Solidarity Transformed: Labor Responses to Globalization and Crisis in Latin America*, 64.

[83] Armbruster-Sandoval, *Globalization and Cross-Border Labor Solidarity in the Americas: The Anti-Sweatshop Movement and the Struggle for Social Justice*, 138.

non-unionized, informal sector. It is possible that employers declare bankruptcy fraudulently, or simply "close" the firm to reopen under a different name, or simply transfer activities to another of their already existing, non-unionized firms.

The fact that four years have passed since the initial success of this mobilization is reason to be optimistic for the long term. When we started the mobilization more than five years ago, another local union officer told me privately that it would be impossible to unionize at Novac, but that he would not reveal this to the workers. He claimed any victory would be pyrrhic, since it would lead to the closure of the factory. This foresight was one of the main reasons for my and Mesut's pessimism about unionization at Novac. But it has not closed or moved thus far.

There are two interrelated factors that support the past and possibly future survival of Novac. The first one concerns the subsector of knitting, on which Novac focuses. The knitwear industry has relatively higher costs of entry compared to woven garments.[84] Besides this sectorial nuance, Novac's main customer, Konda, is a brand of premium and luxury apparels. This means that Konda pursues suppliers with high-quality standards. To find suppliers that can meet these high standards, is difficult, which gives the supplier leverage f. However, as I mention, none of these facts stop the employer from staging the closure of Novac only to keep production going under the name of another firm.

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84 Knitwear factories generally have knitting and sewing departments under the same roof, while factories that produce shirts from woven fabrics buy textile from other factories and just sew them. Textile factories require more investment compared to garment factories, which are mainly concerned with sewing. Anner observes that textile factories are less likely than garment factories to close in the case they are unionized. See Anner, *Solidarity Transformed: Labor Responses to Globalization and Crisis in Latin America*, 168. Therefore, knitwear factories, which mostly combine both dimensions in one firm, require more investment than a garment factory sewing woven fabrics.

§ 6.6 The Third Phase: Rise of Bureaucratization and Internal Conflict

though there were numerous occasions during the struggle apt for romanticizing, there were always several problems. First of all, the lack of involvement by the union branch head during the picket line was unpromising for the future, as he would be in charge once the organizing ended and the first contract was signed.

Mesut supported the second round of action considerably by visiting the picket line frequently and advising his friends; however, he did not get along well with Serkan mainly – I believe – due to a clash of egos fueled by their differing interpretations of Mesut's dismissal. Both emphasize the other's fault for that setback. I tried to overcome the problems between them and made some progress, such that at some point during picketing they became closer. Serkan warmed to the idea of working with Mesut, and the two talked of a plan to take over another branch of the same union transforming it into an active, militant branch with Mesut at the head. Unfortunately, Mesut inattentively talked about the confidential plan to another worker in Novac. As the word spread, Serkan heard of the leak and became livid, ending their short honeymoon.

Serkan had his own faults. He has not been willing to admit or apologize for mistakes, leading him to blame others for his own faults. This is a rare behavior on his part, but it had severe effects on his relations with leading workers because of the high level of trust required for collective working-class mobilization. On the other hand, his legitimate expectation to control the process was perceived and experienced by some workers as authoritarianism. Although these were part of the job of a collective mobilization leader, he could be offensive and manipulative, which sometimes caused a disturbance. Among the leading workers, Mecnun was most influenced by Serkan, while Osman kept his allegiance to Mesut due to their close relationship.

The most important cause of discontent, not resolved by the collective agreement, was a special type of wage inequality among knitting operators. In the first round of collective action, the management raised the wages of workers, who had not participated in the movement and remained close to the management – of "adulators," as the struggling workers call them. During the

time of picket line, this divergence was enlarged and others who hesitated to support the mobilization received raises as well, complicating the wage structure in the department even further. After the reinstatement of nineteen workers, this issue became a prominent problem. Activist workers deeply resented the situation. Rather than being about money, many framed it as an issue of dignity. Several times during the process, Serkan promised that wages in the department would be equalized. However, in the negotiations – in which Serkan was not officially involved – this problem was not resolves, but vaguely left to be dealt with in future arrangements.

The first sign of division among leading workers was revealed during the process of identifying shop stewards. Foreshadowing the bureacratism and authoritarianism of the union, shop stewards were not democratically elected by workers but appointed by the branch head.[85] There was no dispute about Osman's becoming the head steward. However, Serkan informally disclosed a preference for Mecnun as the head steward later overheard by others including Osman.

During the two months before the identification of the two other stewards, Nuri's frequent visits to the union office to see the union head drew the attention of his coworkers. Many interprepted the vis as lobbying for stewardship. At least one of the stewards ought to have been a woman, as nearly half of the workforce was female. As mentioned above, after the workers were reinstated the focus of organizing turns to departments other than knitting, which led to the emergence especially women activists. A young, head-scarfed, newly-married woman, Esra, was the most active, and she became one of the workers Serkan most trusted.

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85   Different versions of Turkish union law (1963, 1983, 2012) all state that shop stewards are to be appointed by the branch management. Even though the law does not mandate democratic elections, it does not outlaw them either. Although few, there are unions that systematically organize democratic elections to choose shop stewards, but this union is not one of them. Moreover, the law dictates that workplaces employing 100 to 500 workers have three shop stewards, one of whom will be the head shop steward. The legal regulations and practices about the appointment of shop stewards in the United States are similar to those in Turkey. See E. Paul Durrenberger and Suzan Erem, *Class Acts: An Anthropology of Urban Workers and Their Union* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), 26.

Asım was a young, unmarried knitting operator who had not been sacked because he was working as an inspector at the time of the collective dismissal. Working at Novac since 2009, Asım was one of the workers Mesut most respected because of his maturity, moral character, and charisma. In time he became a natural social leader of the younger workers in the department, and during the picket line he was the stronghold of mobilization within the department. His name was at the top of the list of possible stewards. The union head called him to the union office, and offered him the post. Asım was not particularly enthusiastic about becoming steward anyway. But the union head made the offer in such a way that made Asım abhor. As he explained the union head talked about the advantages of being a steward as such:

> If you become a steward, you will have the charisma and power to do whatever you please in the workplace. You can work less, you can bargain with the manager personally for your own requests, and all that. You can also move ups and become a professional unionist in the future.

Although he was aware of the union head's lethargy and the indicators of corruption, the boldness of the immoral nature in this homily shocked and disgusted Asım and led him minimize his expectations from TEKSİF.

After two months of consultation, Nuri and Esra were appointed as shop stewards. While Esra's appointment was expected, Nuri's tainted in the eyes of many workers due to his lobbying. The leading workers of knitting department had issues with the alleged lethargy of workers in the rest of the factory, with Serkan's assertiveness, and with the union head's passivity. However, so far they had walked united way due to their years-long struggle, fortified by the electrifying experience of the picket line. Nuri's attitude was the first crack in the solidarity and trust among the leading cadre of Novac workers. Others would soon follow.

On the day they were announced as shop stewards after being officially appointed earlier that morning in the union office, Osman, Nuri, and Esra decided to take the rest of the day off. Osman later regretted this was the early sign of a steward's alienation from the grass-roots workers. As an apprentice of Mesut, Osman was aware of the problems of union bureaucracy and he believed he mentally ready to resist the temptations of the privileges that come

with stewardship. He told that he would not request a room for stewards and that as a machine operator, he would be on the job as much as possible. The collective agreement allowed the head shop steward eight hours each week off from his usual job to perform his representative duties, but there was no such a clause regarding the other stewards. Unfortunately, under the influence of external and internal pressure, Osman would gradually lose these early sensibilities. He did demand and enjoy a room, spent most of his time doing things other than working, and lost his close contact with coworkers in the knitting department. As a detached survivor, Osman was never a man who loved work. He even considered himself lazy (by working-class standards), as did his brother and coworkers. This was a reason for his temptation. Nuri was even more eager to enjoy the privileges of stewardship, although as a normal steward he had less privileges than Osman, a fact which made him jealous.

Meanwhile the problem of inequality of wages in the knitting department persisted and generated discontent, galvanized by dissatisfaction with Osman's distance from the shop floor. The union head adviced patience, promoted collaboration with management, pointed out inefficient bureaucratic procedures, and prevented any mobilization on the shop floor. As head steward, Osman was responsible for conveying the union head's messages to rank and file members and gradually became accustomed to his bureaucratic, demobilized form of unionism. The friction between Osman and Serkan further motivated Osman's getting closer with the union head, even if only as an excuse for Osman. Esra was under the influence of Serkan, and probably due to jealousy for Osman, Nuri also collaborated with Serkan and Esra. Therefore, the stewards gradually became divided: Osman under the influence of union head, and Esra and Nuri close to Serkan. More crucially, rank and file workers including the knitting operators were distancing themselves from all of them.

Knitting operators organized a series of meetings with and without the stewards to solve some problems, but were not particularly successful. Although officially he was not to intervene in an already organized workplace, Serkan organized a meeting at the cost of provoking the union head. But things became worse; Osman and Nuri even quarrelled during the meeting. After a while, Serkan inspired Nuri, Esra, and Mecnun to organize a petition to the union demanding democratic elections for stewards. At the end of 2013,

only six months after signing a collective contract, the once united and victorious workers who led the Novac mobilization fell into open, internal conflict.

Mesut did not play a direct role in these affairs. He tried to organize the three factories for which he worked after Novac, but these attempts were mostly unsuccessful for various reasons and led to his dismissal. Later, his name was blacklisted and he had a hard time finding job in a relatively larger and better workplace. On top of that, due to long-term financial problems amplified by his being consumed by organizing activities and being unemployed his marriage experienced a crisis. His wife moved into her parents' apartment and later divorced him.[86] Shaken by unemployment and divorce, Mesut reestablished his contacts with the political organization with which he used to be involved until the end of the 1990s. With their encouragement and support, in the autumn of 2014 he established a new union in the textile sector with an open socialist stance.

Mesut did not have the time or energy to be deeply involved in the internal politics of Novac, but he was still influential over leading workers like Osman, Asım, and Selami. His influence over Osman was an important source of the mistrust between Osman and Serkan. Mesut was also critical of the union head, but his criticism and dislike for Serkan was stronger and emotional. His advice to keep his distance from Serkan, pushed Osman closer to the union head in practice. If Mesut had had the time and energy to get involved, he (together with Osman) could have built a third, also progressive fraction within the internal politics of Novac. However, that did not happen; in the growing tension between the fractions led by union head and Serkan, respectively, Mesut's stance served to further the union head's sphere of influence in practice.

Nuri, Esra, and Mecnun's gathered significant support for their initiative to demand democratic elections, but the union head organized a meeting to convince them to step back. Meanwhile, Osman realized the extent of his coworkers' dissatisfaction with him. He shared a mild self-criticism with his

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86   Unfortunately, Mesut's moral and political performance as a man, and as a husband is nowhere near of his high standards as a leader of working-class struggle. This was a painful realization for me regarding the importance of morality, the moral contradictions of actors, and the moral significance of class, which is no more important than those of gender or race.

friends, and as a sign of determination, he returned to his job on the shop floor for most of the workday. Due to the intensifying internal conflicts and Osman's counter-measures, Esra decided to leave the factory to give birth to a child – earlier than expected. In this context Osman saw an opportunity to overcome the problems and asked for my help as a relatively impartial outsider to step in. We organized a series of small group meetings in the autumn of 2014 designed to recreate a sincere, trustful social environment – we once had – that allowed people to openly broach criticisms and self-criticisms. During this period, Osman's self-criticism was vivid and convincing:

> I became a real jerk and acted disingenuously;[87] I know that. After I became the head steward, the attitude of management towards me changed abruptly. Once I was the source of the problem, the trouble-maker, the unwanted man. Suddenly I became "Mr. Osman,"[88] the head steward, almost like a manager or something. This flattered me. It had a perverse effect on me.

As Hyman conceptualizes it, Osman was experiencing "the predicament of the stewards," who are "torn between the forces of representation and bureaucratization."[89] Unfortunately, he could not do justice to his own fervent and sincere self-criticism. He was unable or unwilling to challenge the comfort and status quo to which he had become accustomed in the past year or so. When I talked with Osman to evaluate the meetings, I realized that he was eager to backbite if not prevented from doing so. Instead of mutual trust and solidarity, a deceptive and manipulative manner of relating to others had become acceptable for him (and for some others) after the months of infighting. Indeed, deception and manipulation was what the union head most lectured about during his "union education" sessions to shop stewards, as all three explained to me separately. Osman's attempt was fruitless, and soon after he returned to his routine of being away from his job in the knitting department.

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87   The self-critical phrase he used in Turkish was even stronger: "götüm başım oynamaya başladı."

88   The Turkish equivalent of "Mr." is used with given names, not surnames.

89   Richard Hyman, "Politics of Workplace Trade Unionism: Recent Tendencies and Some Problems for Theory," *Capital & Class* 3, no. 2 (1979): 61.

In explaining the process of fragmentation and demobilization, it might seem I am overly focused on Osman's responsibility. Obviously, he was not the only one to put blame on. Even claiming he had the most personal responsibility would be debatable. It should be obvious that the union head had a great share of the blame, but I am leaving him out of this analysis, because his behavior was something to be anticipated and he was never part of the mobilization. None of Serkan nor other leading workers were exempt from serious mistakes. Serkan should have been upfront about the limits of his initiative within the union structure, and he should have taken responsibility for his own failures along the way. Most importantly, he should have won Osman over instead of pushing him toward the union head.

Mecnun should have done his best to resolve the problems between Osman and Serkan – to maintain his complementary collaboration with Osman instead of being influenced by Serkan's tangential provocations. Nuri's transformation was no less dramatic or immoral than Osman's, as would unfold a couple months later. There were indications that rank-and-file workers tended to be overly-demanding and make complaints with unrealistic expectations. This put extra pressure on stewards, leading them to be exhausted. It also gave them an excuse to alienate themselves from the rank and file and embrace the bureaucratic, patronizing language of union bureaucracy as presented by the union head. However, Osman was indisputably the person whom everyone trusted, invested, and from whom they expected the most. Therefore, it is no wonder that his cooptation into the bureaucracy was demoralizing, agonizing, and destructive.

In the winter, the Novac management reopened its operations in Samsun, a coastal city in northern Turkey, and sent some of the machines in the knitting department there. It declared that the department was being downsized. Workers interpreted this as a deliberate move to reduce the number of workers in the department where the militancy and solidarity were still strongest. The union did nothing, putting forward the same excuse of that "there is nothing we can do according to the law and the contract." In an impromptu meeting, persistent workers openly protested the union head. Led by Serkan, workers signed and submitted a petition to management stating that management should renounce this insidious, purposeful attempt to undermine the locus of worker resistance. Among unionized knitting workers, only the two stewards

– Osman and Nuri – refused to sign the petition. Management offered extra severance pay for those willing to leave; by March fourteen of fifty-five workers in the knitting department left Novac. Some left willingly and some were laid off.

As I mention at the end of the previous section, employers of unionized workplaces often stage closures only to keep production running under the name of another firm. Therefore, the union's indifference to this collective dismissal provoked the knitting workers tremendously. They construed it as a first step to further dismissals and possibly a closure. This anxiety was not unfounded: since the signing of the collective contract the Novac workforce had been downsized from a little over 400 to just 300 in a year and half.

Meanwhile, Nuri became conformist, pro-union, and pro-management, saying things like: "It is always the knitting department causing trouble and unrest." Although Osman also served the interests of the union and – through it – the management, he did it in his own troubled, confused, hesitant way, distinct fron Nuri's full embrace of the system.

Inevitably, the union head fired Serkan from the union in April. This an ecpected development, but Serkan's response was not. With the support of a group of leading workers from different factories he had organized in the past, including disappointed veterans at Novac, such as Mecnun, Selami, Asım, Salih, Hakan, and others, he decided to build a new militant, democratic union. Arguably, a new chapter was beginning in the story of the Novac struggle.

§ 6.7 The Fourth Phase: A New Union, A New Hope?

The new union, Bağımsız-Sen, was unofficially founded on the first of May, 2015, at a meeting in which nearly one hundred twenty workers from sixteen workplaces – including fourteen Novac workers – participated. Most leading Novac knitting workers saw this as an opportunity to get past the deadlock in the workplace. They sided with Serkan and participated in the formation of a new union – a new experience for them. In reaction, Osman, who was increasingly depressed, quit his job, left the factory, and stopped communicating with most people from Novac. In time, he found a job in the construction industry, as he did not prefer to work in knitting anymore. Even though his older

brother, Semih, became a member of Bağımsız-Sen, Osman did not get in touch with any of his coworkers in the new union.[90]

By the end of the summer, most of the knitting operators of Novac had joined Bağımsız-Sen, while Nuri – the sole remaining shop steward of the TEKSİF union – became the enemy of the new mobilization. As was the case three years previously, the new mobilization is having a hard time recruiting members from departments other than knitting. This time there is an additional reason. The main problem for the new mobilization is an article of union law that requires unions to meet an industrial membership threshold before negotiating a collective bargaining agreement on behalf of workers in a workplace. The new union law, enacted in 2012, declared this industrial membership threshold to be 3 percent for an independent union like Bağımsız-Sen. This meant a union in the textile and garment sector would have to have more than 30,000 members.[91] Fortunately, in June 2015, the Constitutional Court ruled that the threshold would be one percent for all unions. Although it is not easy to reach 10,000 members, it is not such an unattainable number.

Serkan believes that by using international pressure, he can compel firms producing for international brands to sign collective contracts. He and the members of Bağımsız-Sen strive to convince workers at Novac and other factories to join Bağımsız-Sen and explore this possibility. On the other hand, the TEKSİF union branch head and his steward, Nuri, are actively intimidate and discourage potential recruits to the new union. A recently issued brief of the Fair Labor Association on the limitations of collective bargaining rights in Turkey encouraged "all brands sourcing from Turkey to strongly communicate to suppliers their support for workers to bargain collectively with their

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90   Osman's older brother, Semih, became an active member and supporter of Bağımsız-Sen. Semih's daughter, a university student, volunteered to participate in weekly courses provided by the union for members' middle and high school children.

91   The new union lawunjustly established a one percent threshold for unions affiliated with one of the three main, national union confederations. This discriminatory measure was designed to prevent the emergence of independent unions outside the main confederations. The double standard was the impetus for the Constitutional Court's pulling the threshold down to 1 percent for all unions.

factory or employer – even if they are unable to reach the industry threshold."[92] Because many brands for which Novac produces are members of the Fair Labor Association, the possibility of the new union making a collective contract with Novac is not low.

Why do I present this new mobilization as a new hope rather than just another attempt doomed to be snagged by the same dilemmas as previous ones? Serkan – unexpectedly for a man of his age – seems sincerely determined to build a democratic, militant, and innovative union. It is as if he is finally living a dream to build a union from scratch: he is energetic, enthusiastic, and full of ideas developed during many years he had to work under the control of conservative unionists. He wrote a democratic constitution that requires democratic elections for all posts. The constitution also defines a recall and reelection mechanism that is activated if demanded by one-fifth of the electorate. The wages of the professional unionist will be at most four times more than the average member. Beyond the words written in the constitution, Serkan's practice is promising.

Absence of member education was an important criticism about TEKSİF union. Immediately after opening a union office in June, Bağımsız-Sen began to organizing basic, mandatory membership education programs. As part of the vision that the union should not be limited to work life, the union provides free educational support to members' children every Sunday. Moreover, members began building a network to provide inexpensive, healthy food products by purchasing directly from rural producers. The flow of products like eggs, olives, and tea had already begun. The union also organized a city tour led by a university lecturer and focusing on the labor history of Istanbul. By December 2015, the new union had organized most workers in three small knitting workshops that employed less than 50 workers. The employers have recognized Bağımsız-Sen as the representative of the member workers, albeit informally, due to the aforementioned industrial membership threshold.

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92   "Limitations on Collective Bargaining Rights in Turkey," Fair Labor Association, accessed July 12, 2015, http://www.fairlabor.org/report/limitations-collective-bargaining-rights-turkey.

The history of newly built, experimental, militant unions is not promising in Turkey.[93] Bağımsız-Sen is not affiliated with any of the three major union confederations, which further complicates its survival. However, the recent decision of the Constitutional Court changed the situation by de facto establishing a lower threshold. Furthermore, Serkan's utilization of international pressure and the innovative unionism at stake might help break the pattern.

Because of Serkan's long, close involvement with Novac, it's workers are among the core members of the new union. Among others, Mecnun and Asım are becoming Serkan's closest colleagues. Dealing with the complexities and hardships of building a new union, both men have a much larger vision than the particular problems of their own workshop. Another man proving that the experience of transformation at Novac endures is Ekrem, who becomes another core member of Bağımsız-Sen and organized all of his current coworkers into the new union. Ekrem participated in the Novac mobilization from the very beginning, but due to his boldness was among the first group of four, along with Mesut, who was sacked before the first victory in 2010. After Novac, he worked in various workplaces together with Mesut, kept in touch with friends from Novac, but more importantly, he maintained his fervor. When he heard of the idea of building a new union, he became involved and organized nearly twenty-five knitting workers in his current workplace.

We would expect Selami to be involved as much as the other two, but in 2014 he became a petty entrepreneur as a second job. In collaboration with a partner, he developed the enterprise into a small workshop producing dress hangers. Through 2015 he kept working at Novac and supported the new union, but he dedicated most of his time to his entrepreneurial endevaors. Selami's absence was an unexpected and crucial loss for the new mobilization. In the last months of 2015, he caused trouble for the members of Bağımsız-Sen because of absenteeism and poor performance at work. He came close to being

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93 This is liekly a universal pattern not specific to Turkey. However, there are exceptions to this pattern, like New York Taxi Workers Alliance, or the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, and others. See in Milkman and Ott, 2014. A health sector union organizing workers in public subcontractors, Dev-Sağlık-İş and an energy sector union Enerji-Sen are closest examples in Turkey. Both unions are part of DİSK confederation, which is a serious leverage. However, the former is mostly paralyzed by measures taken by the government since 2014, while Enerji-Sen still represents a hope to break the pattern.

fired a couple of times, which would have hurt the new mobilization: TEKSİF activists would aggressively cite such an incident to denigrate Bağımsız-Sen, claiming that the new union could not even defend its core members. After a last absentee crisis, Selami decided to leave the factory, when he realized that management was ready to give him severance. At the beginning of 2016, Selami left Novac to become a full-time entrepreneur, a dramatic moment in the course of events. He was the last still working at Novac from among the core group of three – Mesut, Osman, Selami – who had started the mobilization so many years before. This reveals how difficult it is for labor activists, even the most motivated and skilled ones, to endure and keep struggling.

Novac knitting workers remain closely united and sensitive about their working conditions. However, they are not actively recruiting new members, neither in other departments nor in other workplaces. The level of activism is not promising except for that of a handful of workers, especially considering the task at stake, namely to build a new union. New members and new activists emerged among women workers in other departments, where the real battle is being waged. Unfortunately, most of the workers hesitate to resign from TEKSİF. Many workers like Nuri turned against Bağımsız-Sen for various reasons. Faced with a rival union, TEKSİF suddenly became active and promised many gains in the next round of collective bargaining. Novac management clearly showed its disapproval of Bağımsız-Sen and its preference for TEKSİF, a fact which influences hesitant workers.

Besides this external problem, another problem soon emerged. Aysel, a strong woman, stepped forward as an active female member of Bağımsız-Sen. She is a vocal, resistant, and decisive leader when it comes to challenging the supervisors or TEKSİF's steward on the shop floor. However, we soon realized that she was uncomfortably domineering and annoyed workers with whom she interacted.[94] Ensuing internal conflicts slowed the mobilization by damaging its harmony and credibility.

The future of the Novac mobilization is uncertain. Bağımsız-Sen's organization at Novac could be wiped out in the near future, leaving behind greater regrets and frustrations. However, a group of Novac workers has not yet given

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94 She is reminiscent of Cihan from the previous chapter, although she is not as bad as Cihan in this sense.

up, and what is at stake is more than a minor growth in the collective bargaining coverage of Turkey. If Novac workers achieve their aims, they will also make a contribution to the making of a wholly-new, militant, and democratic working-class organization. The latter is a difficult, unlikely mission indeed; however, working-class struggle, by definition, always faces steep odds.

§ 6.8   The Enigma of Subjective Transformation

The examination of social movement outcomes is underdeveloped, probably due to the "ambiguity over what constitutes success and failure," since "success is an elusive idea."[95] When scholars turn their attention to the outcomes of social movements, they focus on consequences that are external to the movement. However, "some of the most profound effects of collective action lie elsewhere – In the subjective transformation of social movement participants themselves."[96]

The issue of subjective outcomes is crucial for broader theoretical and political debates about the labor movement. One of movements' major dilemmas has been the iron tendency of oligarchy: the formation and sustainment of a distinction within the movement itself between a minority at the top and those who constitute the rank and file.[97] This mostly results in the bureaucratization and corruption of the former and the alienation and demobilization of the latter.

Another threat is the tendency to become a labor aristocracy, which is another type of distinction: between those in the movement and other workers who are not. We know that "actually existing unions divide at the same time

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95   Armbruster-Sandoval, *Globalization and Cross-Border Labor Solidarity in the Americas: The Anti-Sweatshop Movement and the Struggle for Social Justice*, 137.

96   Meyer, "Perpetual Struggle: Sources of Working-Class Identity and Activism in Collective Action," 6-7.

97   See Judith Stepan-Norris, "The Making of Union Democracy," *Social Forces* 76, no. 2 (1997); Kim Voss and Rachel Sherman, "Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy: Union Revitalization in the American Labor Movement1," *American Journal of Sociology* 106, no. 2 (2000).

as they unite"[98] and "competitive sectionalism has most commonly been the hallmark" of the labor movement.[99] What I mean by labor aristocracy is a privileged minority of unionized workers who neither support nor care about the struggles of the majority of workers who suffer worse conditions. A labor aristocracy does not refer to an economic condition of being relatively well off compared to wider segments of the laboring classes. It would be unfair to judge a group of workers who struggled to get better rights only because the outcome made them objectively more privileged. What can be judged, on the other hand, is the embrace of an aristocratic subjectivity. The moral question is whether – after reaching a privileged position – one cares enough about others to continue to act on their behalf. Burawoy underscores this tendency as one reason to be more skeptical about labor struggles vis-avis "Polanyi type" struggles against commodification.[100]

Focusing on the subjective dimension of labor mobilization, many labor scholars argue that mobilizations have the potential to change and transform

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98   Richard Hyman, *Understanding European Trade Unionism* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 36.

99   Ibid., 31.

100   Burawoy, "From Polanyi to Pollyanna: The False Optimism of Global Labor Studies," 306. In his dichotomy Burawoy frames the labor movement in its more classic form as a union movement, a "Marxian type of struggle against exploitation." Although in later articles Burawoy makes important, realistic points about the labor movement – which should help labor movement scholars to better diagnose problems and work to develop cures – his comparison and final theoretical preference fail to be convincing. He does not really show why Polanyi-type struggles are more liberating and more prone to flourish and develop compared to "Marxian type" struggles. Obviously, the real handicaps of one alternative do not automatically imply the supremacy of the other; the other alternative has its own handicaps and limitations. The debate about the MST movement in Brazil is a good, revealing example of a grandiose Polanyi-type struggle. See Zander Navarro, ""Mobilization without Emancipation": The Social Struggles of the Landless in Brazil," in *Another Production Is Possible: Beyond the Capitalist Canon*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (London: Verso, 2006); Horacio Martins De Carvalho, "The Emancipation of the Movement of Landless Rural Workers within the Continual Movement of Social Emancipation," in *Another Production in Possible*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (London: Verso, 2006); Joao Marcos de Almeida Lopes, "The "Back of the City": The Landless and the Conception of Another City," in *Another Production Is Possible - Beyond the Capitalist Canon*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (London: Verso, 2006).

its participants, such that they adopt more activist and critical subjectivities.[101] One should not be overly optimistic about the transformations collective action can bring about, but it is the most effectual means for changing working class subjectivities. "Cognitive structures are not forms of consciousness but dispositions of the body"[102] and the practical recognition of the limits imposed on the dominated often takes the form of "bodily emotions."[103] Therefore, "while making things explicit can help, only a thoroughgoing process of countertraining, involving repeated exercises, can, like an athlete's training, durably transform habitus."[104]

Durrenberger and Erem's anthropological findings from a fieldwork in a union local suggest the same: people do not learn in classrooms but through practice, "by moving from peripheral participation to more and more central and expert roles in a community of practice – people who recognize and validate certain kinds of activities."[105] Among other things this is because "many spheres of knowledge are not coded in language, cannot be abstracted and explained, and must be learned in practice." This type of knowledge might be conceptualized as "embodied knowledge."[106] Thus, they conclude, "it is more efficacious to engage people in relevant action than to try to change their minds."[107]

Action is the answer, Durrenberger and Erem would argue, but whether, how, and to what extent the transformations survive after a collective action is another open question refering to the debate about the subjective consequences of the mobilization. There are few field studies on this subject. Mann

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101 Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*; Mann, *Consciousness and Action among the Western Working Class*; Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*; Colin Barker, "Fear, Laughter, and Collective Power: The Making of Solidarity at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdnask, Poland, August 1980," in *Passionate Politics*, ed. Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

102 Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 176.

103 Ibid., 169.

104 Ibid., 172.

105 Durrenberger and Erem, *Class Acts: An Anthropology of Urban Workers and Their Union*, 48.

106 Ibid., 102.

107 Ibid., 112.

draws skeptical conclusions from a strike he examines.[108] In his monograph on an active British union, Gall argues that strikes radicalize only a small minority among workplace union activists.[109] Darlington asserts that strikes have the potential to increase workers' confidence to change society directly rather than relying on trade unionists or parliamentarians to do it their the name.[110] He provides a nuanced account of the relation between collective action and subjective transformation:

> The extent and breadth of radicalization is often dependent on the size, duration and strength of the strike; on whether it is offensive or defensive, victorious or defeated; on the broader level of working class resistance within society; on how effective trade union officials (and social-democratic party leaders) are in blocking or restraining action; and the effectiveness of radical socialist intervention and leadership.[111]

Although strikes are the action among the working class repertoire that "provides the greatest threat to capital,"[112] the conclusions of these authors with regard to strikes can be generalized to other forms of working class action and mobilization. For example, Markowitz compares two successful unionization struggles and concludes that "strategies used by unions to organize workers have ramifications for worker activism after the campaigns end." She observes that if union leaders allow and encourage worker participation in the decision-making process, workers tend to feel more self-efficacy and show a higher level of activism after the mobilization.[113]

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108   Mann, *Consciousness and Action among the Western Working Class*, 48.

109   Gregor Gall, *The Meaning of Militancy? Postal Workers and Industrial Relations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 260–65.

110   Darlington, "The Role of Trade Unions in Building Resistance: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Perspectives," 122-24.

111   Ibid., 124.

112   Cohen, "Workers Organising Workers: Grass-Roots Struggle as the Past and Future of Trade Union Renewal," 143.

113   Markowitz, "After the Organizing Ends: Workers, Self-Efficacy, Activism, and Union Frameworks," 379-80.

In her comprehensive work dedicated to the subjective outcomes of labor struggles, Meyer compares a living wage campaign with a strike. She concludes that the living wage campaign led participants to embrace a class struggle consciousness. The participants came to adopt an activist identity and believed that the struggle was perpetual, because a political logic of collective action was manifested in the living wage campaign. On the other hand, the strike had an economic logic and therefore did not lead these outcomes.[114] Meyer's work is conceptually lucid and greatly contributes to this underdeveloped area, but has two methodological weaknesses that overshadow its conclusions. First, the two cases of collective action Meyer compares differ vastly in terms of size, duration, and strength. Less than a hundred people staged the three-day strike, while "thousands" participated in the three-year living wage campaign. Since their size, duration, and strength – to use Darlington's formula – differ to such a degree, these differences might well be the real reason for differing subjective outcomes. Secondly, Meyer's work is based exclusively on interview. One cannot but question whether or not the living wage campaign participants' evoking of activism and perpetual class struggle have a practical impact on their lives.

The Novac case reveals how collective action can indeed transform workers subjectively into labor activists, a fact confirmed not only by the workers' words, but their actions. Many workers who participated in different waves of the mobilization, became passionate labor activists rather than passive union members or free riders. Expressing their own personal enlightenment, they articulate the variety of class-struggle consciousness during daily interactions and interviews. The first wave of activists who emerged in the first phase kept struggling to organize knitting workers in different workplaces thanks to the devoted activism and leadership of Mesut. Although that drive lost momentum in time, aggressive attacks by management rekindled the mobilization after almost two years. Activist subjectivities were again energized as mobilized both new-comers in the knitting department and workers in other departments. To an extent, the subjective transformations in the first phase obviously survived into the second phase such that these worker activists managed to

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114   Meyer, "Perpetual Struggle: Sources of Working-Class Identity and Activism in Collective Action," 189-94.

take on the much greater challenge of unionization, a rare achievement in Turkey's labor scene. Osman, Selami, Mecnun, Nuri, Asım, Ekrem, and others not mentioned turned into apparently, enduring labor activists. However, as the story unfolds, some of these newly forged activists and altruistic subjectivities regress.

The transition from the second to the third phase in the Novac case marks the end of one moment of trade unionism – the "movement" moment – and the beginning of another – the "institution" moment.[115] There is a universal tension between these contradictory moments of trade unionism that really-existing unions embrace to certain degrees in certain moments. Trade unionism as a movement embraces "workplace resistance, direct democracy, membership mobilization and radical economic and political aspirations."[116] On the other hand, trade unionism as an institution cherishes "formal, official and often bureaucratic 'representative' structures that prioritise collective bargaining and institutional survival (the protection of material and financial assets)."[117]

The third phase uncovers a different face of mobilization – namely regression after success – and sheds light on the enigma of whether and how subjective transformations survive beyond peak moments of mobilization. In desperation, Mesut explained the way he saw it: "While we were 'I's, we became 'we,' but they turned back into 'I's. They all look out for number one nowadays."

The dramatic turn of Osman (together with the less-dramatic turn of Nuri) epitomizes that process. It is encouraged by the highly contradictory nature of trade unions, which both expresses and contains working class resistance to capitalism, "such that the unions were at one and the same time agencies of working class conflict and accommodation with the power of capital."[118] Os-

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115   Cohen, "Workers Organising Workers: Grass-Roots Struggle as the Past and Future of Trade Union Renewal," 142.

116   Darlington, "The Role of Trade Unions in Building Resistance: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Perspectives," 133.

117   Ibid.

118   Ibid., 113.

man's union head clearly embraced an accommodation approach, which explains Osman's temptations to an extent. But to leave it there sacrifices the subjective to the objective. Osman had some agency and – to use a famous phrase – he "was present at [his] own making"[119] into a bureaucrat. He knew all the risks and temptations he would face due to his long talks with Mesut, yet despite the promises he made to friends and himself, he could not pass the test. He realized, hesitated, regretted, perhaps even tried to reverse his remaking, but in the end, he let it be.

His transformations into a radical, sacrificing, leading activist, and then into a demobilizing shop steward who enjoyed the privileges of the position and broke from coworkers, does not only uncover the strength and cunning of the complicated structures of hegemony that accommodate resistance and resisters. As an extreme case, it shows how subjective transformations are fragile and reversible and how the extraordinary of the mobilization yields to the ordinary of capitalist hegemony. Osman's tragedy discloses that the line between the leaders of the labor movement and its rank and file is pervious. It recalls Cihan's question: "If I somehow become powerful, will I defend the same position?"

This does not mean that the bureaucracy and rank and file are equally to blame. Union structure is by no means natural, on the contrary, it is designed to corrupt activists and turn them into bureaucrats in a bureaucratic machine. There is a temptation which suggests to activists that they deserve privileges due to their self-scrificial efforts building the mobilization; but it is not irresistible.

Osman had many excuses. Workers around him continued to feel dependency on their employer, which made them hesitant to mobilize when it was necessary. This made Osman cynical about coworkers other than those in his close circle. Novac workers won a significant victory in the second phase, but at least some leaders became tired and mistrustful, feeling that they had sacrificed enough "for these people" at Novac. The coworkers' dilemma in the form of mistrust and cooperation difficulties played in a magnified form due to the more complicated forms of cooperation needed vis-à-vis those needed

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119   Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, xx.

for simple, everyday forms of shop-floor resistance. The greater numbers involved in the mobilization required Osman to deal with every union worker in the factory, and the internal politics of the union local further complicated the situation.

Durrenberger and Erem disclose how the internal politics of a union local rest on "personalism" and how "the local is rife with gossip, personal office dramas such as shouting matches, avoidance, forced joviality, and a sense of jumping from crisis to crisis every day."[120] Mistrust for coworkers and everyday problems of cooperation at the grassroots level is reflected in the upper levels of the labor movement as fierce internal fighting, such as between the union head and Serkan or between Serkan and Mesut. One of the chief obstacles to achieving the goals of the labor movement is the labor movement itself, where "internal fighting gets in the way of a united front."[121]

Cooperation is neither easy nor automatic. As Sennett points out, it requires the skills of understanding and responding to one another emphatically in order to act together.[122] "Listening well, behaving tactfully, finding points of agreement and managing disagreement, or avoiding frustration in a difficult discussion" are among the "dialogic skills" needed throughout the process.[123] The expression "everyday diplomacy"[124] uncovers the importance and the depth of this underestimated task given that diplomacy is its own, peculiar area of expertise. Cooperation is "a thorny process, full of difficulty and ambiguity and often leading to destructive consequences."[125] The scarcity of these skills, compounded by political and economic limits on cooperation, easily leads to the rise of the "uncooperative self" and "the psychology of withdrawal."[126] To make significant changes – such as changing a bureaucratic, corrupted union local – takes strategic planning and "concerted action over

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120   Durrenberger and Erem, *Class Acts: An Anthropology of Urban Workers and Their Union*, 31.

121   Ibid., 35.

122   Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation*, 229.

123   Ibid., 6.

124   Ibid., 121.

125   Ibid., x.

126   Ibid., 179, 273.

long periods,"[127] for which only a tiny minority is willing to sign up. Such so-phisticated, longterm cooperation seems unpromising among the majority. We experienced this again when we established Bağımsız-Sen and saw that how few people are willing to carry the burden of building a new union.

What about morality? An ethnography of collective mobilization clearly reveals the moral dimension of the labor struggle. Altruism –in its nuanced, gradual, non-pure sense – and the sacrifices of the leading workers are obvious in stories such as Mesut's. Osman's about-face also uncovers the moral nature of the labor struggle. What was in his best interest of Osman: to contiue a per-petual struggle to change the corrupt union structure, devote his time and en-ergy to mobilize his coworkers, and thereby risk his hard-won position of chief shop steward? Or to accommodate to the conservative union structure and enjoy the privileges of stewardship, secure his position, and devote his political energy to climbing the union hierarchy? As leaders of labor mobilization, Mesut was faced with the stick, Osman was faced with the carrot. One needs a rather strong moral conviction to be able to endure the stick or decline the carrot. For everyone, but particularly for the leaders, a labor struggle is a moral rather than merely a rational choice.

A final note is necessary to elaborate on Selami's no less dramatic turn. He was the third person recruited into the mobilization in 2010, and served as one of the leaders in several critical roles. Since experiencing that first victory in the leadership role, he has been passionate about class struggle. On a long, night ride we made to Ankara to participate in a workers' meeting, he ex-plained his interesting Islamic theological theories, wherein he had formu-lated class struggle as a religious mandate. Leaving Mesut beside, Selami was probably the Novac worker who worked hardest to mobilize knitting workers in other workshops. I cannot forget that at the end of the second round of the Novac mobilization he cried for the coworker who was forced to leave the fac-tory unwillingly because the employer refused to reinstate more than nineteen workers. He is sentimental and sincerely cares for people around him. But the entrepreneurial spirit got into him, and with some luck he grew a side business into a fully-fledged one. He says he is building it for his son, a highschool dropout with no promising future in the labor market. Long after we met, I

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127   Durrenberger and Erem, *Class Acts: An Anthropology of Urban Workers and Their Union*, 86.

learned that Selami's father had run a working-class neighborhood restaurant. Moreover, Selami's younger brother is also an entrepreneur and runs a small business in Russia with some help from his older brother. Selami's sad fall out of working-class struggle shows that if left to interest, members of the working class may find other ways to pursue their interests in the capitalist market open to opportunities for them, even though these are limited and mostly fleeting.

Some workers became corrupt, some could not endure the consequences, some just became bored, some tired, some lost hope, some had a sick family member, some gave birth to a child, some became pissed off by the actions of someone else in the movement, some found more important things to do, some changed jobs or sectors, and some tried their luck as petty entrepreneurs. There are so many reasons to leave, indeed. Although newcomers do arrive, much fought-for recruits somehow quit. Swimming against the current, it is so difficult to sustain the resistance and accrue resisters. Emotional fever and shared hopes and dreams yield to everyday concerns, routine, and boredom.

Fortunately, there are others than Osman or Nuri or those who gave up for different reasons. They are those who turn into labor activists and stick with it at least for now. Indeed, the reason Osman's transformation caused such a stir and a counter mobilization rests on the fact that the original Novac mobilization created relatively strong activist subjectivities. In another setting, a transformation such as Osman's might have been accepted as inevitable and endurable. This is more or less what happened in numerous unionization struggles that win a victory on paper. Osman's story epitomizes the taming and breaking of working-class resistance through the flesh and bone of hard-won labor leaders.

Because we became friends and comrades over the years, I know the weaknesses, exhaustions, and temptations of Mecnun, Asım, Serkan, and others (including myself). There is not much to romanticize in their stories. But they are the ones now carrying the fragile and wayward spirit of class struggle. We are trying to hold the line without exaggerating or dramatizing what we are doing. This is the scene of working-class struggle in today's Turkey.

§ 6.9   Conclusion

Even Bourdieu suggests that hijacking by spokespersons is a main reason why resistance movements do not grow. This is "contained in the imperfect correspondence between the interests of the dominated and those of the dominated-dominant who make themselves the spokespersons of their demands or their revolts."[128] Blaming leaders for the weakness of labor is universal formula of radicals. This formula serves their romanticism about the rank-and-file workers to survive. It even leads a sophisticated, veteran scholar of labor like Darlington to formulate a simple juxtaposition:

> The central problem is that while the rank-and-file of the union have a direct interest in fighting against the exploitation of employers and government, and indeed have everything to be gained by fighting for the success of militant strikes, full-time officials have a vested interest in the continued existence of a system upon which their livelihood and position depends.[129]

I have no problem with the analysis of full-time labor officials, but the oversimplified portrayal of the rank and file as militant is a perfect example of romanticizing them. As I show, workers' interests might be harmed rather than advanced in a fight against employers; moreover, they have many avenues to "gain" other than just militant strikes.[130] Przeworski objected to such an understanding in 1980 in a passage that is even more moving in today's, post-2008 financial crisis world:

> Afraid to dream up utopias, pressured by the poverty, repression, and injustice of everyday life, we tend to stake our fortunes on the worsening of each crisis, as if the crises of capitalism would of themselves lead

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128   Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 188.

129   Darlington, "The Role of Trade Unions in Building Resistance: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Perspectives," 126.

130   Indeed, Darlington himself mentions the mutual determination between the leader and led: "leadership is a dialogue between leaders and led with many different shop-floor figures involved in argument, evaluation of the situation, and advocacy of practical proposals for action." See "Agitator 'Theory' of Strikes Re-Evaluated," 503.

to socialism. Every time capitalism enters a crisis – and it does so often – we claim that it has arrived at the limit of its potential. Every time we are surprised when it rises reformed and healthy from the debris of human suffering, and all we can do is claim that once again the work-ers' "true" interests were betrayed by the leaders who sought to protect them from this suffering. Every time a new conflict appears we dis-cover a new mortal contradiction – economic, racial, sexist, ecological, or what not. And we continue to live under capitalism.[131]

What I want to underscore in this passage is the betrayal of leaders, which serves as a magical meta-explanation. It is simple but effective, because it is impossible to disprove due to a hidden tautology. Indeed, it is the leaders who are most at fault when any movement becomes compromised. However, in the case of the labor movement, it is likely that those leaders created the move-ment in the first place. Collective working class struggle is almost always cre-ated and developed by individuals who become well-deserved leaders in the process. They are the ones who have the greatest motivation and energy to mobilize among the grassroots.

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131   Przeworski, "Material Interests, Class Compromise, and the Transition to Socialism," 146.

Przeworski is not the only one who protests the fact that radicals laying the blame on leaders to excuse the grassroots. Burawoy,[132] Willis,[133] and Hyman[134] do the same in their own way. It is alarming that all four scholars made this observation at a moment in their intellectual history marked by a transition from radicalism to a more moderate stance.[135] It seems it is difficult to stay radical without exculpating the grassroots for the robustness of capitalism. Targeting leaders as if they form an ontologically different stratum from the rank and file is an effective way to do that.

In a more balanced way Durrenberger and Erem capture the roles of the leaders and the rank and file:

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132   "[T]he claim that only a corrupt union leadership and a contaminating culture block the spontaneous and immanent tendency of the working class toward class struggle is also unsatisfactory. Leaders in part reflect the demands of the led, and the strength of a culture is linked to its roots in working-class life." See Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism*, 192.

133   Willis points out how cultural and daily resistance of working class – "cultural penetrations" to use his words – are important but fall short of structural transformation and may even undermine the possibility of such transformations. This is partly because there is no political organization leading the way, but the casual relation between the lack of political organization and working class agency also works the other way. "In one sense the reason why these cultural penetrations and associated practices fall short of transformative political activity is simply the lack of political organisation. No mass party attempts to interpret and mobilise the cultural level. This is too facile, however. The lack of political organisation itself can be seen as a result of the partiality of the penetrations - not vice versa. The cultural level is clearly partly disorganised from within." See Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, 145.

134   "[T]he notion of 'trade union bureaucracy' has normally represented a descriptive category or derogatory slogan rather than an analytical concept adequately embedded in a serious theory of trade unionism. In effect, the term can be employed to present trade union officialdom as scapegoats for contradictions inherent in trade unionism as such. … For there is an important sense in which the problem of 'bureaucracy' denotes not so much a distinct stratum of personnel as a relationship which permeates the whole practice of trade unionism." See Hyman, "Politics of Workplace Trade Unionism: Recent Tendencies and Some Problems for Theory," 54, 61. We can generalize the term "trade unionism" in Hyman's passage to "working-class struggle."

135   As it should be clear by now, I do not attribute a categorically greater value to radicalism than reformism. What matters are deeds, not the theoretical positions of my belief.

This was a union, a democratic organization, but the people in charge had been there long enough and had enough to lose that they weren't about to let something as uncontrollable and unpredictable as democracy get in the way of their mortgage payments and their lofty plans for the working people of the state. They would ride the tide of uninvolvement…[136]

… Maybe union leaders, having resigned themselves to the reality that most members don't care about politics and organizing, as our study showed, have decided not to try to force, convince, or educate members to care. You can get awfully tired swimming against that current of indifference.[137]

Lively, but sad, and alarming words. The actual author of these lines, Erem, was a dedicated union representative who left the labor movement disappointed after writing these lines. It is not easy, not only for members of the working class, but also for politically-motivated, intellectually-sophisticated activists from the middle and upper classes. It seems one must motivate oneself with a pinch of romanticism about the grassroots in order to keep swimming against the current. This is the subjectivity of intellectual. We should be aware of it, but also grant some understanding.

To more realistically evaluate working class subjectivity and agency for the purposes of both analysis and political prescription, we need to add morality to interest- or habitus-based understandings of human agency.

In a focused attempt to reflect on workers' struggles, Bourdieu does justice to his own theory.

It seems that at every moment in workers' struggles, three levels can be distinguished: first, there is an 'unthought' aspect of the struggle (what is 'taken for granted', the doxa), and one of the effects of 'operativization' is that there are things that no one thinks of disputing and demanding because they do not come to mind or are not 'reasonable'; secondly, there is what is *unthinkable*, what is explicitly condemned

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136   Durrenberger and Erem, *Class Acts: An Anthropology of Urban Workers and Their Union*, 173.
137   Ibid., 189.

('what we know the bosses will not give way on' – sacking a foreman, talking with a workers' delegate, etc.); and, at a third level, there is the claimable, the demandable, the legitimate object of demands.[138]

This passage is an application of Bourdieu's theory of habitus to the phenomenon of collective working-class struggles, which suggests one explanation why resistance is ubiquitous but restrained. It falls short of explaining why the Novac struggle lost its momentum in the third phase. Nothing in Bourdieu's three levels illuminates Osman's turn, because Osman's problem was not cognitive – not even in the sense of a deep, emotional, bodily belief sense. Osman did turn into a demobilizing bureaucrat, because the other way was "unthought" or "unthinkable" for him. The significance of Osman's case is that it uncovers the moral nature of working-class struggle in an obvious way, impossible not to appreciate. This moral stance is valid for every worker who participates in a collective mobilization, although perhaps in less evident forms or with varied magnitude. Osman's moral turn was not only his fault; it was encouraged and excused by what Osman perceived as the relative indifference of his coworkers. He probably would not have surrendered himself if he saw that a sufficient number of his coworkers were motivated and morally convinced of the struggle to change the union from within. However, "sufficient" is debatable and subjective.

Bourdieu's other diagnosis for limited resistance is hijacking by spokespersons, and this might seem to explain the case of Osman. However, it conceals more than it reveals. Osman was not a "dominated-dominant" or "spokesperson" at the beginning of the process. He was one of the dominated who dared to become a leader of the resistance. It was his becoming a leader that made him a spokesperson in the first place. Therefore "dominated-dominants" or "spokespersons" are mostly not a group separate from the dominated, but a group that emerges from within it. Thus, a complex interaction among the dominated creates the hijacking by spokespersons, not merely the spokespersons' misguided agency.

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138   Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*, 172.

Agency, in general, – or in its specific form of resistance – is never merely a reaction against something unpleasant. It also contains an alternative project, even if only in nascent form, as Ortner succinctly reveals:

> Broadly speaking the notion of agency can be said to have two fields of meaning. … In one field of meaning agency is about intentionality and the pursuit of (culturally defined) projects. In the other field of meaning agency is about power, about acting within relations of social inequality, asymmetry, and force. In fact, "agency" is never merely one or the other. Its two faces – as (the pursuit of) "projects" or as (the exercise of or against) "power" – either blend of bleed into one another or else retain their distinctiveness but intertwine in a Moebius-type relationship.[139]

Since resistance is not only a reaction against something, but always also a positive project to alter the extant set of relationships, there can be as many such projects as the number of people being oppressed. This is why the task of cooperation in collective resistance is both essential and difficult. Second, resistance must promise an alternative project even if only in a nascent and flexible form, and this project must contain a moral content about how relations should be redefined and reorganized. Both opponents and potential participants in a mobilization will scrutinize this alternative moral claim and score how consistent the movement's practice with these claims. Opponents will do that to find inconsistencies and exploit them in their counter-mobilization. Potential participants, on the other hand, will do it to decide whether or not to trust and join in the adventure.

Another anthropologist, Scheper-Hughes, underscores the centrality of morality and its irreducibility to culture:

> Anthropologists (myself included) have tended to understand morality as always contingent on, and embedded within, specific cultural assumptions about human life. But there is another, an existential philosophical position that posits the inverse by suggesting that the ethical is always prior to culture because the ethical presupposes all sense and

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139   Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory*, 139.

meaning and therefore makes culture possible. "Morality," wrote the phenomenologist Emmanuel Levinas "does not belong to culture: it enables one to judge it." Accountability, answerability to "the other" – the ethical as I am defining it here – is "precultural" in that human existence always presupposes the presence of another. That I have been "thrown" into human existence at all presupposes a given, moral relationship to an original (m)other and she to me.[140]

If we acknowledge morality as the third important dynamic of human agency along with interest and cognition,[141] we can discern three moral queries with which workers constantly deal every moment of a worker struggle. The term "alternative" below refers to an alternative "project" in nascent and fluid form, which will likely evolve throughout the trajectory of a mobilization. It is neither an articulated, static formation nor a systemic blueprint, but carries moral implications about what one *should* do:

1 Convincing oneself of the alternative: Do I embrace a position, which not only defies the authority (i.e. the employer), but also attributes equal worth to everyone – as revealed in a demand for better conditions from the employer, as well as in a call for unity and solidarity among coworkers?

2 Practicing the alternative: Given that to build the alternative project, I have to trust in, share, and cooperate with large numbers of people. Am I sure it is possible and worth the tremendous social and emotional labor and time required?

3 Sacrificing for the alternative: Am I so convinced and dedicated that I will face the attacks and decline the bribes that will be generated in such a struggle?

If a person does not answer each of these morally loaded questions more or less affirmatively, it will be difficult for her to join and stay in the mobilization. Those who do not or cannot (even if they would like to) will most likely convince themselves of the opposite position. The latter will argue for the naturalness of the social hierarchy and the inevitably selfish that leads human beings to unending battles of egos. It is not easy for an individual to admit that

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140 Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*, 23.

141 The relative weighs of cognition, interest, and morality in different subjectivities and on different occasions is a question that demands an empirically-grounded theoretical survey.

he does not make the morally good and demanding choice due to indifference or selfishness. It is much comfortable to make oneself believe that there is no such option, because everybody is selfish and those who praise solidarity are dreamers, if not scammers. Most people actively participate in the process of being persuaded that capitalism is fair enough; because the other choice is morally demanding and requires sacrifice.

Bourdieu once said that "the work of legitimation of the established order is extraordinarily facilitated by the fact that it goes on almost automatically in the reality of the social world."[142] I believe the moral aspect of human agency and the process I outline explains this automaticity. To put it simply, when one sees that objecting to an established order requires sacrifice, he chooses to accommodate it instead. Of course, the habitus of an individual making such a moral consideration will be molded by the structures of power. Hypothetically there might be persons so deeply embedded in structures of power that they cannot even comprehend alternative moralities, but I suggest are make a minority. I argue that for the others, resistance requires not only rational and critical inquiry, but also a specific moral persuasion.

Working-class radicalisms born in the nineteenth century, such as socialism, communism, Marxism, syndicalism, and anarchism have served well to fill the moral gap in the working-class struggle.[143] Mesut's story is just another one that proves the point. Few could sacrifice as much as he without being devoted to a meta-discursive moral crusade. As I show, working-class resisters – just like middle-class intellectuals – swim against a strong current of capitalism and need high moral standards, which can only survive if fed by great hopes, dreams, and discourses. This is why the next upsurge of the working class will be after or simultaneous with the rise of a radical ideology – a new one or an upgrade of one of the classics.

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142 Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 181.

143 They did that with a strictly amoral discourse. First of all, this was because of their allegiance to a certain materialism that condemns and denies morality as a tool and fiction of idealism. The second reason was strategic: to motivate revolutionaries and working-class observers, they propagated and in time actually believed that what they were striving for was strictly in line with the obvious interests of all workers and of humanity. They only needed to evoke rational thinking backed by the course of history, not moral conviction.

7

Conclusion

The urban ethnography presented in this dissertation scrutinizes workers' subjectivities in a working-class neighborhood of Istanbul, Turkey. It sheds light on the cultured agency of Turkish workers. I examine and question workers' apparent docility in our era of capitalist hegemony in the Turkish context as an extreme case of this global tendency. I claim that there is a widening gap between the subjectivity of workers and advocates of labor, which should be brought into balance. This contributes not only to the understanding of how class works, but also how to support the everyday struggles of workers. The political aim of this dissertation is to mediate between communities of workers and intellectuals, because the former needs the support of the latter to sustain their struggle for justice. Although my research is at a specific time (the neoliberal times), in a specific geography (Istanbul, Turkey), and on a specific, ethno-cultural section of the working class (Turkish Sunni), I believe the findings have strong implications for other times, geographies, and cultural groups.

As an introduction to the subjective account of being a worker in İkitelli, I begin by probing popular terms such as "*el işi,*" meaning "stranger's business," which denotes wage work. I demonstrate that in a social environment where most people come from rural, family farm households and where the urban economy enables a considerable number of workers to become self-employed, wage work does not seem given. I contend that "*el işi*" evince popular resentment and non-identification with wage labor. In the first empirical

chapter, I also narrate a life story in detail to give one complete picture of a working class life. This revealing life story is the foundation for raising two theoretical issues.

The first is proletarianization. After a review of the international literature, I argue that the multiplicity of proletarianization processes cannot be reduced to its two extreme cases: abrupt and semi-proletarianization. Among the gradations, Turkey stands close to the pole of semi-proletarianization, together with countries such as Taiwan and China. To capture the strong, small-peasant background of Turkish workers, I propose a term. While Thompson argued that English working class made itself on the basis of "the free-born Englishman," I assert that this basis for the Turkish working class is best captured by the phrase "the independent-producer Turkishman." Contrary to those who defend the significance of semi-proletarianization, I claim that the buffer of rural property ownership does not automatically pacify militancy among the working class.

As for petty entrepreneurism, I claim that it is key to understanding the hegemony of capitalism. The actually-existing level of entrepreneurism among the working class is difficult to dismiss as marginal. Sennett and Cobb's work is an example of the neglect of entrepreneurism. I assert that the most significant hidden injury of workers in İkitelli are their self-accusations that they have not succeeded at becoming petty entrepreneurs. Using data from different countries, I show that entrepreneurism and the aspiration to become entrepreneur among the working class is considerable in many countries. It is not an anomaly of particular localities, but a structural feature of capitalism.

In the third chapter I plunge into the meanings that workers attribute to their work. Even for manual workers, work under capitalism is more than just being the principal arena for class struggle. I operationalize the meaning of work in order to examine workers' experiences beyond the axis of resistance and compliance, an axis that has overly consumed critical researchers. I analyze pessimistic and optimistic accounts of the meanings manual workers attach to their work, showing that in the literature there is a tendency to make generalizations such as "the alienated worker destined to be meaninglessness" or "the hard-working meaning seeker."

Following from my field work, I propose a framework comprised of four subjectivities that workers move among. *Craftsmen* are a minority in the

neighborhood, enjoy a high-level of skill, and take pride and pleasure in their jobs. *Hard workers* do not have a particular craft, nevertheless take pride in and identify with their work. Neither taking pride in nor despising their jobs, the feelings and attachment of *detached survivors* with respect to their work are not strong. In terms of finding meaning in or satisfaction from work, they survive – no more, no less. *Despisers*, on the other hand, are those for whom being able to detach oneself from one's job is a luxury. Their negative feelings about their jobs are strong, and particularly for men they include self-despisal, as well.

The first two subjectivities obtain positive, intrinsic meanings from their work, and optimistic accounts in the literature focus on these to the exclusion of all else. The detached survivor and despiser, on the other hand, show few signs of obtaining positive, intrinsic meaning, as pessimistic accounts generalize to all workers. While it would be ideal to establish a pattern between workers' subjectivities about their work and their tendency to comply or resist, such a pattern cannot be ascertained from my fieldwork. This might be because no such pattern exists, or because the size of my sample is not sufficient to make that type of conclusion. Nevertheless, I raise two points about this relationship: I reveal that having positive feelings about work – i.e., being a hard worker – does not necessarily imply passivity. Moreover, I observed that when hard workers decide to resist, their chances of mobilizing coworkers are higher due to the respect they likely enjoy on the shop floor. Secondly, I remark that despisers tend to feel unable to resist, especially as men tend to despise not only their jobs, but also themselves.

My discussion on the meaning of work also concerns the meanings attached to manual labor by society in general. For a more equitable society we should narrow the gap among the symbolic meanings attached to different jobs and skills. Undermining the hierarchy among jobs is crucial for undermining capitalist hegemony and different forms of class hierarchy. Under capitalism, it is difficult to abstract manual jobs from the specific working conditions in which they are embedded. Nevertheless, as my fieldwork uncovers, some performers of manual jobs create and enjoy parts of their work and derive positive meanings from them. These meanings can serve as the ingredients to construct a culture from-below, which in turn can overcome the taken-for-granted hierarchy among different jobs and forms of labor.

Before exploring resistance, I focus on compliance and compliers. The fourth chapter maps the vast terrain of compliance from which resistance may emerge and grow. Besides general observations workers make about compliance, I introduce the words and deeds of four male compliers, surveying how, why, and to what extent they comply. I demonstrate that they not only comply, but preach compliance. Compliance and the compliant haunt resistance and resistant, and vice versa. Just as there is a struggle between capital and labor, there is a struggle between the compliant and the resistant, or more accurately, between compliance and resistance within the subjectivity of each worker. Compliance leaves its deep mark on resistance, and without understanding compliance, one cannot understand the weakness of resistance, why the resistants are mostly unsuccessful, or why they seem to not try hard enough. Resistance and compliance are intricately interdependent.

Following the great theoretician of compliance, Bourdieu, I distance myself from the Marxian understanding of consciousness and resistance. The latter claims that humans have a vested interest in liberating themselves from exploitation and domination. These interests are hindered by coercion and the hegemony of the ruling elite. However, rationality is only one capacity upon which humans build agency. Culture and subjectivity are much more deep and powerful than assumed by the universal humanism espoused by the Enlightenment. Moreover, the link between an individual's interest to be free from exploitation and domination, on the one hand, and the collective formation of a community free from those evils, on the other, is far from unproblematic.

"Custom makes all authority," Bourdieu claims, and legitimation "goes on almost automatically in the reality of the social world."[1] For centuries, humans have been living in unequal societies in terms of class, gender, and race. It is clear that this experience has deeply molded cultures and subjectivities. Today's deep and prevalent naturalization and compliance are the price being paid for struggles and hopes lost in the past. The symbolic power of the dominant class has inscribed submission "in the bodies of the dominated."[2] I claim that resistance – not compliance – deserves attention and explanation. This point is especially valid for non-defensive forms of resistance.

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1 Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 181.

2 Ibid., 171.

Although I utilize Bourdieu's exploration of compliance, I argue that Bourdieu does not have a theory of resistance and mobilization as he partially admits. This is probably due to his resolute theoretical pessimism. The crucial point here is that his theory of compliance remains to be imperfect, due to the lack of a theory of resistance which should complete the former. Building on this framework of compliance, in the ensuing chapters I examine resistance and draft a non-romantic theory of the subjectivity of working-class resistance.

As for resistance, I first remark that resistance is neither a natural nor obvious response. It is a specific option among many for improving one's conditions, four of which I examine. Among other options a worker can also improve her conditions by becoming an agent of the management, by hard work, by entrepreneurism or by searching a better job.

My investigation on resistance consists of two chapters. First, I broadly explore the possibilities and limits of resistance, and present different cases and the dilemmas they face. The significance of these dilemmas is that they restrict acts of resistance "almost automatically," as Bourdieu claims, without deliberate intervention by the powerful.[3] In the second chapter on resistance, I focus on a prolonged case of collective resistance, analyzing it thoroughly, and elaborate on the dilemmas that I have defined.

The first dilemma is the dependency, which I count as the principal dilemma. Under capitalism, workers are dependent on the entrepreneurs to find jobs. This dependence conditions resistant workers to oscillate between militancy and moderation and to feel incapable of challenging capital in more aggressive ways. Wage labor has always been a privilege; it signifies not only exploitation, but access to the means of production. Market conditions, where the means of production are not wholly monopolized by a closed group impossible to penetrate, endow employers with independence and creativity. Workers, on the other hand, experience and become accustomed to dependency.

The second dilemma is the dilemma of craftsmen, who exhibit the highest levels of resistance and solidarity. Although many observers expected craft

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3   Ibid., 181.

jobs to die out under capitalism, they have proven their durability. A craftsman knows by experience how difficult is to expand the reach of worker resistance beyond a certain point. Already in the upper echelon of the manual working class, he must bypass the shop floor and get involved in broader, working-class mobilizations via unions or politics in order to expand his rights. However, these require a special kind of activism, sociability and sacrifice of leisure time.

The dilemma of coworkers, by which I mean the difficulty of cooperation among coworkers, is a major reason of many recalcitrant workers are unable to advance their resistance. To further their rights, workers must act collectively in numbers requiring high levels of trust. A couple of informant workers can easily undermine a large mobilization, leaving behind a cloud of mistrust. Local, cultural, and historical factors can only amplify or mitigate the dilemma of cooperation, since cooperation is already "a thorny process, full of difficulty and ambiguity and often leading to destructive consequences."[4] Miscommunication, competition, and the problems of collective decision making that abound in every human collectivity render the cooperation among workers difficult to foster and maintain.

The fourth dilemma, that of the small workplace, is well-recognized, and because of its prevalence I relate a lively, everyday example. Workers in small firms are restricted by their high level of expendability. Moreover, collective action is hard to take or nearly impossible. Resistance can emerge, but it is confined to moderate forms, such as exiting. Just like craftsmen, small workplaces were once expected to become extinct, but they have also proved durable.

The last dilemma is the dilemma of morality: a hidden but crucial requirement of working-class struggle. I raise three points about why interest by itself does not explain resistance and why moral commitments play a crucial role. First, resistance has costs. Losing one's moderate satisfaction at work and sacrificing time and energy are simple ones. The retributions capitalists will inflict upon a worker may follow, such as losing a promotion or one's job altogether or even being blacklisted. Resistance is a journey to uncertainty. The final results are uncertain, but the fact that conditions will worsen – before they will

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4   Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation*, x.

possibly improve – is not. So while acquiring better working conditions is in workers' interests, struggling for them is most likely not.

Internalization of class conflict is the second reason. The relations of exploitation and domination are not one-dimensional, but complicated and intersectional. Many people hope to enjoy a more powerful, future position in the complex web of power relations in which they are embedded. This leads to the internalization of class conflict, the process by which the struggle among people leads to a moral struggle within each person. The fact that someone behaves exploitively in those relations where he enjoys a more powerful position in turn can legitimize (in his eyes) his own exploitation by those who are more powerful than him.

The third reason concerns collectivity. Mobilization theories underscore the importance of identity and group formation in order for collective resistance to emerge. However, they do not recognize the role morality plays in this formation. As emphasized by sociological studies on morality, social solidarity requires certain moral values, such as altruism. Working-class solidarity is no exception. Solidarity depends on a degree of altruism, which means both the will and the behavior of undertaking action that benefit other people. As my protoganist Mehmet once summarized, workers are more or less aware of the exploitative relations they experience, but they "think individually, not collectively."

In the second chapter on resistance, I explore collective working-class resistance by focusing on an interesting case. I argue that this story serves as a microcosm of working-class struggle in contemporary Turkey. I observe the ups and downs of the mobilization, its quite unexpected twists and developments. During my long fieldwork I witnessed both mobilization and demobilization, resistance and compliance, revolutionizing and regression of subjectivities – and most importantly, oscillations in between each of these dichotomies. Following from this rich case study, I scrutinize two interrelated theoretical issues: the question of subjective transformation due to movement participation, and the significance of the dilemma of morality, which reveals itself in more obvious ways in the context of collective mobilization.

Mobilizations have the potential to change and transform its participants, making them more willing to embrace activist and critical subjectivities. They are indeed the most crucial means of changing working-class subjectivities,

but whether, how, and to what extent these transformations survive after the pinnacle of collective action are important, but unanswered questions. My case reveals that collective action can indeed subjectively transform workers into labor activists, a fact confirmed by workers' words and actions alike. Indeed, many workers who participated in the mobilization along its different waves subsequently became passionate labor activists. But my crucial contribution lies elsewhere. As the story unfolded, I show how some of these newly forged activists and altruist subjectivities regress. I present the dramatic turn of a leading worker into a demobilizing bureaucrat, which epitomizes this regression. His transformation into a leading, radical, self-sacrificing activist at first and subsequently into a demobilizing shop steward who enjoy the privileges of the position, shows that subjective transformations are fragile and reversible.

Although many workers turned into activists at the time, only few continue against all odds. Others gave up or lost their passion for various reasons. Some became corrupt, some could not endure the consequences, some became just bored, some tired, some lost hope, some gave birth to a child, some simply became turned off by the action or character of someone else in the movement, some changed jobs or sectors, and some decided to try their luck with petty entrepreneurism. There are so many reasons and excuses to leave the movement. Although new people join in, much labored recruits quit. While swimming against the current, it is a real challange to sustain the resistance and accrue resisters. Emotional fever and shared dreams yield to everyday concerns and routine. Nevertheless, this is not the whole of the story. There are still those who turn into labor activists and stick with it – at least for the time being.

The second issue I explore with this case is the significance of morality. An ethnography of collective mobilization most clearly reveals the moral dimension of labor struggle. The altruism and sacrifices of leading workers are obvious in my story. Osman's transformations also vividly uncover the moral dilemma of labor struggle: was it in his best interest to carry through a perpetual struggle to change the corrupt union structure by risking his newly earned position of chief shop steward … or to accommodate the conservative union structure and devote his energy to climbing the union hierarchy? As leaders of a labor mobilization, Mesut was faced with the stick, Osman with the carrot.

Neither to endure the stick nor to decline the carrot is easy, but both demand strong moral convictions. For everyone, but for leaders in an even more pronounced way, labor struggle is a moral choice rather than merely a rational one. Before blaming corrupt leadership for the weakness of labor, we should recall that these leaders are likely the ones who created and nurtured the mobilization in the first place.

Agency – whether in general or in the specific form of resistance – is never only a reaction against domination. It also concerns "intentionality and the pursuit of (culturally defined) projects" as Ortner argues.[5] Agency is never merely one or the other of its two faces, but always both intertwined. Resistance has to promise an alternative project – even if only in a nascent and flexible form –, which in turn has to include a moral content about how relations *should* be redefined and reorganized.

If we acknowledge morality as the third, important dynamic of human agency alongside interest and cognition, we can discern three moral questions that workers must continually ask themselves during a worker struggle. These concern convincing oneself of the alternative, practicing the alternative, and sacrificing for the alternative. If a person does not answer these morally loaded questions affirmatively, it will be difficult for her to join and endure in the mobilization. Afterwards, she will most likely convince herself of the opposite arguments: the naturalness of social hierarchy and the inevitability of human selfishness. It is difficult to admit when one has rejected the morally right path due to one's own selfishness; it is much more comfortable to make oneself believe that there is no such alternative, that everybody is selfish, and that those who praise solidarity are dreamers, if not scammers. Therefore, I claim that *most people actively participate in the process of being persuaded that capitalism is fair-enough; the other way is morally demanding and requires sacrifice.*

The moral aspect of human agency and the process I outline perfectly explain Bourdieu's automaticity. Because one knows that objecting to the established order will require sacrifice, he chooses instead to accommodate it. There might be persons who are so deeply embedded in the structures of power that

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5   Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory*, 139.

they cannot even comprehend alternative moralities, but they probably constitute a minority. For the rest, resistance requires not only a rational choice and a critical inquiry, but also a specific moral persuasion.

Working-class radicalisms such as socialism and anarchism have actually served to fill the moral gap in the working-class struggle. Mesut's story is just one that proves the point. To swim against the strong current of capitalism, working-class resisters – like their middle-class counterparts – must live up to a demanding moral standard, which they can only manage if fed by great hopes, dreams, and discourses. This is why the next upsurge of the working class will probably be after or simultaneous with the rise of a new radical ideology.

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