

WASTE PAPER PICKERS AS AN INFORMAL OCCUPATION IN ISTANBUL

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by

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ABSTRACT

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Waste Paper Pickers as an Informal Occupation in İstanbul

This thesis examines migration, ethnicity, stratification, and the informal economy by focusing on Waste Paper Pickers (WPPs) as an informal occupational group in Istanbul. I conducted a yearlong fieldwork project among WPPs in Istanbul, collecting ethnographic, observational, participant observational and interview data to develop a description of the everyday lives of WPPs and how they organize their daily work routines. This thesis identified most WPPs as immigrants enmeshed in family, friend and compatriot relationships and examined differences and similarities among WPPs. This thesis focuses on internal, legal migrants, some voluntary and some involuntary, and on these migrants' experiences in the informal economy.

WPPs produce significant social and economic benefits in recycling wastes, converting inoperative waste into valuable resources, contributing to the economy as well as cleaning cities worldwide. Waste paper picking is a 'tactic' employed by immigrants, forced immigrants, lower-class people, unskilled people, or drunk people in Istanbul.

Three main factors account for immigrants entering this occupation: (1) kinship / relative / friend and compatriot relations, (the WPPs' social capital); (2) the easy entry to this occupation; and, (3) the 'mafia' or hiring WPPs on daily basis. Rather than only one type of WPP, they can better be understood as falling into five different types. WPPs in each type differ in their work, the way they work, the money they earn, and their relations with local people. Among my informants, some WPPs can be seen to fit into more than one type while others fall only into one. These types are: (1) Old-hand WPPs, (2) Beginner WPPs, (3) Drunk WPPs, (4) Hired WPPs, and (5) Seasonal WPPs.

Key Words: Waste Paper Picking, Migration, Informality, İstanbul.

KISA ÖZET

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HAZ 2013

Bir Enformel Sektör olarak İstanbul'da Atık Kağıt Toplayıcılığı

Bu tez İstanbul'da göç, etnisite, tabakalaşma ve enformel ekonomi bağlamında mesleki bir grup olarak Atık Kağıt Toplayıcılarını incelemektedir. Bu çalışma bir yıla yakın bir sürede etnografik, gözlemsel, katılımcı gözlemsel ve mülakat verileriyle atık kağıt toplayıcılarının nasıl bir gündelik yaşam kurdukları ve gündelik işlerini nasıl organize ettiklerini çözümlenmeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu tez birçok atık kağıt toplayıcısının aile, arkadaş ve hemşerilik ilişkileriyle bu işe başladıklarını tespit etmiş ve atık kağıt toplayıcıları arasındaki benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları incelemiştir. Bu tez iç, yasal, bazı gönüllü ve gönülsüz göçmenlerin enformel ekonomi tecrübelerine odaklanmıştır.

Atık kağıt toplayıcıları kullanılmayan atıkları kullanılabilir kaynaklara dönüştürerek, önemli sosyal ve ekonomik kazanımlar üretmektedirler. Ekonomik kazanımların yanısıra dünyadaki şehirlerin temizliğine de katkı sunarlar. Atık kağıt toplayıcılığı zorunlu göçmenler, göçmenler, sınıf altı kitleler, vasıfsız ve sarhoş insanlar tarafından kullanılan bir taktiksel iş bulma yöntemidir.

Göçmenlerin bu mesleğe girmelerinde üç temel faktör vardır:(1) Akrabalık / yakınlık / arkadaşlık ve hemşerilik ilişkileri, (Atık Kağıt toplayıcılarının sosyal sermayeleri); (2) bu mesleğe kolay giriş; ve (3) 'mafya' ve gündelikçi atık kağıt toplayıcılığı. Tek bir atık kağıt toplayıcısı tipolojisinden ziyade, beş farklı tanımlamayla anlaşılabilir. Atık kağıt toplayıcıları işlerinde, iş yöntemlerinde, kazandıkları paralarda, yerel insanlarla olan ilişkilerinde farklılık göstermektedirler. Benim muhataplarım arasında bazı atık kağıt toplayıcılarının tek bir çeşit olarak değil de kendi içlerinde farklı gruplara ayrıldıkları görülmüştür. Bunlar: (1) Eski ve uzun süreli Atık Kağıt Toplayıcıları, (2) Yeni başlayan Atık Kağıt Toplayıcıları, (3) Sarhoş Atık Kağıt Toplayıcıları, (4) Gündelikçi Atık Kağıt Toplayıcıları ve (5) Mevsimlik Atık Kağıt Toplayıcıları.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Atık Kağıt Toplayıcıları, Göç, Enformellik, İstanbul.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WPPs: Waste Paper Pickers

ILO: International Labour Organization

WO: Warehouse Owner

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

This thesis fits in the larger sociological conversation of ethnicity, stratification, occupation, and social marginality. Like most mega-cities in developing countries, Istanbul is experiencing stress from population increase and rapid urbanization. This urban growth puts pressure on waste management in Istanbul, too, straining the abilities of municipalities to address waste management needs effectively. Waste pickers take advantage of the inadequate formal waste management programs by collecting useable and renewable materials from the streets of Istanbul. Waste Paper Pickers (WPPs) not only meet their own economic needs but also provide benefits to their communities, their municipalities and the environment.

Waves of mass internal migration have washed over Istanbul since the 1950s. Two waves of migration before and after the 1990's differ in their origins. Scholars argue that, before the 1990s, population movements to Istanbul were mostly driven by economic concerns, particularly employment opportunities in the city. However, by the late 1990s, the economic attractions of Istanbul were replaced by migration marked by ethnic characteristics and deteriorating conditions in Eastern Turkey: for the last twenty years, most migrants to Western Turkey have been Kurds displaced by armed conflict between the Turkish armed forces and Kurdish insurgents, accompanied by the imposition of Emergency State Rule in the Kurdish regions of Turkey.

The largest component of recent migration to Istanbul is the hundreds and thousands of displaced Kurds who came from the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey. On their arrival in Istanbul and other cities of Western Turkey, they relied on kin and community networks to survive in extremely unfavourable conditions, and they found themselves on the economic and spatial peripheries of the cities. Many Kurdish immigrants came to Istanbul looking for economic opportunities to replace those previously available in their home region. Constituting a cheap labour source, with few professional qualifications, and ready to work in any job they could find, displaced Kurds became a major part of the informal labour market in Istanbul.

Marginalisation and social exclusion have become recognisable urban experiences for displaced Kurds.

I started this research with this information in mind. I thought almost all WPPs in Istanbul are Kurdish forced migrants. Main questions of this research are “Who are they?” and “Why do these people start this occupation?” These questions frequently asked me by, who learned that I am studying this issue. Apart from these questions, I have other questions, “What is informality? Why we call this occupation as an informal one?”

The background of this thesis started in the winter of 2011 when I wrote a term paper on paper pickers for a graduate course. The more I have read about WPPs, the more it became a curiosity for me. Therefore, I decided to conduct further research and learn more about them.

This thesis, apart from this introduction, has four chapters. The second chapter focuses on the scholarly literature about WPPs both inside and outside Turkey. It explores the role of WPPs worldwide as well as in Turkey. The second chapter also examines the structure of informal occupations and the match between migration and migrant WPPs as an informal occupation.

The third chapter outlines the methods used in my research and why those methods are useful and appropriate.

The Fourth chapter presents my data and their analyses. I include discussions of the gender, age, levels of education, and migrant and ethnic statuses of my informants. This demographic portrait is followed by accounts of the migration stories of my informants in their own words and my analysis of those stories. I show the role of immigration in the composition of this occupational group – how they migrated and when, and how immigration affects the dynamics of this occupation. I identify the paths for entering the world of WPPs, including both how I entered that world and how my informants entered it. I describe the daily routines of my informants and develop a typology of WPPs and how WPPs interact with each other and also with other people. The last chapter presents my conclusions drawn from my research.

1.2. Purpose of study

Waste Paper Picking is just one of many informal occupations in Istanbul. The value of waste picking is very important to the development of cities. Waste pickers are not formal participants in the public solid waste management system however they make significant contributions to public health and safety, the local economy and environment sustainability. Therefore a detailed study needs to be done about informal sector, especially about waste paper pickers.

The purpose of this study is to identify the people who join this occupation, the requirements for entering this occupation, and the external and internal effects shaping that occupation

1.3. Study Area

In this study, participant observation and participant interview techniques were used to gather information about waste paper pickers in Istanbul. In spite of the significant benefits waste pickers make to public health, the environment and the economy, they still suffer from poor working conditions in Istanbul. Everyday, they face harassment, disrespect and also violence. They do not have any social protection. The findings of this study may provide recognition of vital role of waste pickers play and encourage authorities to make new policies to protect them.

1.4. Why this Thesis is Important

This thesis is important because it challenges some popular beliefs supported and transmitted by public media about waste paper pickers –that they are criminals, migrants, psychotics, alcoholics, illiterates, and unskilled or so. This thesis helps us better understand the working conditions, reasons for starting this occupation, and who composes this occupation.

Waste pickers are subject to social stigma¹. However, for many people in Istanbul, waste picking offers a livelihood. They face unhealthy work conditions, social outcast, social marginalization, discrimination and racism.

¹ Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963)

1.5. Limits of the Thesis

This is exploratory qualitative work. I do not test hypotheses nor do I generalize beyond my sample of informants. My triangulation of methods (interview, observation, and field work with participant observation) was useful because it identifies and categorizes important characteristics of this sample of İstanbul WPPs. The thesis also generates further research questions, which lie outside the scope of the thesis.

The limitations of this thesis include that it gives information only about a sample of WPPs in İstanbul, indeed, it is only based on my informants' stories that they shared with me: in order to make generalization about WPPs in Turkey, more research is called for in other cities of Turkey. The data are based on my informants' shared information. It was not possible to talk with all WPPs in İstanbul. Nobody knows the number of WPPs in İstanbul, to enumerate İstanbul's WPP population requires time and money beyond my resources.

In addition to these limitations, since the research gathering method is based on interview, observation, and fieldwork with participant observation, the thesis rests on my informants' points of view. Data gathering continued for a year, stopping in July of 2012. I was working fulltime during the course of this research so the research was limited as well by my duties in my job. I conducted my data gathering on weekends, at night, and on the day each week when I was released from my other duties. Over the course of yearlong data gathering, weather conditions impacted the data gathering. Not only winter's cold nights but also summer's hot days produce challenges for WPPs and for someone studying them. Because of weather conditions led to some of my meetings with WPPs were cancelled in both winter and summer times.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Role of WPPs in Worldwide Waste Management

H. Neşe Özgen, a sociologist, describes waste as a notion that emerged with urbanization (2001). In rural areas wastes are not so important because there are not enough wastes to effect human's life in a harmful way. The proportions of wastes are at a low level in rural areas. People burn their wastes or bury those wastes in rural areas. However wastes are visible and have a significant economic value in cities. Wastes must be collected from cities as much as achievable, since, the more it stays in the streets the more it causes health problem for inhabitants and animals. 'Waste' can be described as 'disused/obsolete materials and goods'. However, the visibility of wastes and its economic value in cities create an important subject for many areas on concern.

WPPs survive from selling waste paper and other waste materials that they collect from public areas. A. Scheinberg and J. Anschütz, advisers on Urban Environment and Development, Gouda, the Netherlands, state that, "Waste pickers recover recyclable materials from mixed waste in street bins, containers, communal collection sites, vacant lots, and final disposal sites. They sell these to dealers and thus indirectly provide local industries with recycled resources" (2005:655). These papers and materials are waste from houses, restaurants, shops, and workplaces. WPPs pick up wastes from city streets and municipal waste receptacles; waste collection is ordinarily a municipal responsibility but municipalities are often ineffective in waste collection and waste recycling in developing countries.

Waste management system is not sufficient to meet the need in developing countries so informal systems of waste management are growing. Despite the significant efforts of municipalities to collect wastes from cities, still, inevitably, these wastes are not all collected successfully.

Every day, mostly towards evening, men and women pull hand trucks full of garbage, using all their power, trying to pull their hand trucks behind them, walking to nearby trash cans or trying to separate recyclable materials from the other garbage in the streets of Istanbul. It is towards the evening because WPPs have to take all

recyclable wastes from the streets and from trashcans before the municipality's garbage collectors take it.

Wastes cause environmental, health and also financial problems if it is not collected. It creates financial problems because wastes become a valuable object for municipalities for having-nots (poor families) as well as entrepreneurs. WPPs most significant contribution to municipalities is recycling wastes, converting inoperative waste into valuable resources, contributions to economy, as well as cleaning the city. Thus, environmental and financial concerns equalize, in some level, with contributions of WPPs to society (Ergun 2005).

The waste management system in Istanbul is ineffective for two main reasons. First and the most important reason is high growth of population due to internal migration, from rural area and other cities to Istanbul, from the early 1980's until now. Second, İstanbul is composed of many small municipalities, which have limited resources, technology to collect wastes effectively, and administrative ambiguity.

Osman Nuri Ağdağ, a member of the Environmental Engineering Department in Pamukkale University, compares old and new municipal waste management system in Denizli, states that, "Rapid urbanization, growth population and changes in lifestyles in developing countries contribute to increasing the per capita municipal waste generation" (2009: 456). Due to migration, rapid urbanization and high growth population produce improper and poor waste management system in cities of Turkey. Uncontrolled high population increases "the generation rate of municipal solid waste" (Ağdağ 2009: 456). In general, waste management systems are insufficient due to the lack of planning for migration and increased population. Berkun et al., support this idea saying, "In Turkey, increased population, industrialization, and standarts of living have contributed to an increasing amount of solid waste and its consequent ... problems" (2005: 847).

From the early 1980's, the rapidly increasing population has had negative effects and created urban problems in Istanbul (Keyder, 1999). No doubt, one of these problems is the waste management system (Ergun 2005). Dilek Unalan, a faculty member of Environmental Engineering in Bosphorus University, in her article, *Sustainability of New Urbanism: Cases from Istanbul*, states that, "... Istanbul suffers from the higher population density and poorly managed ... equity, social

justice, basic human needs, employment, poverty, health, urban environment and infrastructure” (2010:1). Both Unalan and Keyder focus on the problems of Istanbul produced by increasing population, which has put enormous burden on Istanbul, and its municipalities for collecting so over municipality to collect wastes (Turan et al. 2009; Metin et al. 2003; Berkun et al. 2005; Ağdağ 2009).

A review of the literature on waste pickers in other countries shows that most third world countries face rapid urbanization, which is so similar to Istanbul, with fast population growth and in migration, while the strategies for dealing with the effects of this problem differs in different countries. The population of Istanbul was around 4.7 million in 1980; however, in 2000 the population had become around 10 million people (Kaya and Curran 2005; Işık and Pınarcıoğlu 2011; IBB 2012; Berkun et al. 2005). Scholars argue both forced / voluntary migration, rapid urbanization and unpredicted population density are reasons for having a weak waste management system and thus for having waste pickers in Istanbul. Berkun et al. state that, “most of the valuable materials are recovered from the solid wastes by street collectors (30% of the paper and glass, 70% of the plastics) who sell these material to scrap dealers” (2005: 851). So, the absent or weak management system not only “creates serious environmental problems, but also causes serious financial and socio-economic losses” (Ağdağ 2009: 456), WPP’s efforts, partly, close the gap of these financial and socio-economic losses. The rapid increasing of population in Istanbul creates different problems in different fields. All these processes are compounded to each other. Consequently, the result of one is the reason of other.

The report of the Ministry of Environmental (Waste Management Action Plan 2008-2012) expresses that most of solid wastes do not disposed in term of legislations. Further, the report offers some reasons why this wastes have not been disposed properly, including administrative, financial and technical problems. “Presence of a large number of local administration in the same region composes cooperation and coordination of disposal of waste management complicated” (Waste Management Action Plan 2008-2012: 7). Disorganization of local administrations causes weak administration, too.

The cost of waste management system is quite high for municipalities. For example, the transportation of wastes from cities to landfill locations and the

payment of garbage collectors are two main costs for municipalities (Turan et al. 2009). Settling waste management systems in cities, studies show that, are expenses; therefore, an effective waste management system cannot be settled easily in developing countries. These three expenditures of settling waste management systems are main reasons effective systems are not constructed. Gurdal Kanat, a faculty member in Environmental Engineering at Yildiz Technical University, examines the situation of municipal waste-management in Istanbul, in his article, *Municipal Solid-waste Management in Istanbul*. He argues that, “in recent years, municipal waste management in Istanbul has improved because of strong governance and institutional involvement. However, efforts directed applied research is still required to enable better waste management” (2010: 1737). In this research, Gurdal argues, solid waste management is one of the major environmental and economic problems in Turkey, as well as in Istanbul (2010). Further, Gurdal indicates, the core problem of solid waste management is “the institutional structure and consequently the mismanagement of the resources” (2010: 1737).

In Turkey, waste management not a desired level. However, ineffective waste management systems in developing countries as well as in İstanbul, creates a job opportunity for “having-nots or want-mores” people to collect then sell these wastes (Alinsky 1971, Gurdal 2010, Ağdağ 2009, Berkun et al. 2005, Metin et al. 2003). Martin Medina (2009) examines the physical characteristic of Third World cities, such as, “their rapid expansion, and the lack of resources to provide them with the necessary infrastructure and urban services, which translate into an insufficient collection of the wastes generated, as well as their improper disposal on the street, vacant lots and in municipal open dumps” (2009: 2).

Scheinberg and Anschutz, advisers on Urban Environment and Development in the Netherlands, emphasized in their article, *Slim Pickin's: Scavengers and Waste Pickers in the Modernization of Urban Waste Management System in the South* (2005), that in some South countries, such as Philippines, Tanzania, Egypt, Thailand, India, and Cambodia, inequalities of waste management systems lead to an improvement in the livelihood of Waste pickers. According to Scheinberg and Anschutz (2005), in these countries the number of waste pickers who get benefits from absence of waste management system grows day by day.

David Kuria and Rina Muasya, in a study commissioned by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing, provide an overview of solid waste picker activities in Kenya (2010). This study shows that paper pickers are important to making the city work, so policy makers should pay attention to their work environment, health and support their informal cooperatives. Thus, this study will help me to comprehend how informal cooperatives in Istanbul, among waste paper workers can support them with dealing everyday life.

The literature shows that the number of waste pickers is increasing day by day, not only in big cities of Turkey, but also in many undeveloped and developing countries. Developed countries have the abundance of capital and high labour cost while developing countries have a scarcity of capital and unskilled labour. Martin Medina, currently Professor at El Colegio de la Frontera Norte in Mexico and a world expert on this subject, analyzed the informal recycling activities in Third World cities. He found that because of the lack of recycling programs in developing countries, “recycling activities carried out by waste picker cooperatives ... mostly in Asia and Latin America” (2009: 2). In many Asia and Latin America countries, two main reasons, which can be seen in other developing countries, push people into this occupation high population growth and the absence of waste management systems due to insufficient technical equipments and resources. Melani Samson supports Medina’s idea: “...more and more people are likely to turn to waste picking as a survival strategy” (2009:1). At the same context, Scheinberg and Anschütz gives some examples of countries about entrants into waste picking, such as, Argentina, Bulgaria and Roma “gypsies” in Eastern Europe Countries (2005). The characteristics of developing and developed countries differ markedly. Due to these differences, the numbers of WPPs differ as well. As Medina states, “recycling of municipal solid waste in developing countries relies largely on the informal recovery of materials from waste carried out by waste pickers” (2009: 8). Thus, I wonder what prompts people to turn to waste picking in Istanbul?

Refusing to be Cast Aside: Waste Pickers Organising Around the World, edited by Melanie Samson, includes several accounts about waste picker organizations around the world (2009), including focuses on waste pickers organizations in Kenya, Columbia, Turkey, the Philippines, South Africa, and so on. In this comprehensive

study, I saw the important role of being organized and its benefits to waste pickers. They can lobby for the establishment of transfer stations in every municipality or they can discuss standard prices for waste paper. Francie Lund and Jillian Nicholson, researchers in the Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), emphasized the value of being organized for informal workers in their study, *Tools for Advocacy: Social Protection for Informal Workers* (2006). Lund and Nicholson stated that, “Unlike formal workers, informal workers are usually excluded from social and legal protection and from collective bargaining agreements. ... One of the most powerful ways to respond to this isolation and lack of protection is for informal workers to form or join an organization that can take action to defend and advance their interests” (2006: 40). WPPs need social protection in their work and improved policies to recognize them. Thus, being organized will help them to change the policies. Policy and policy change happen when people gather together and ask for it. But being organized is not easy for Turkey's waste pickers. However, the Waste Pickers Association in Ankara and the Recycling of Waste Paper Organization in Ankara are two new organizations putting this idea in practice. In Istanbul, *KATIK*, a magazine about waste paper pickers aiming to inform the general public about issues surrounding the occupation has been published regularly for the past two years. Organizing waste paper pickers in Turkey then is at an early stage.

Yujiro Hayami, a researcher in the Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development in Japan, Dikshit and Mishra, researchers in the Society for Economic and Social Research in India, all examine waste pickers' contributions to the urban poor to society in their study, *Waste Pickers and Collectors in Delhi: Poverty and Environment in an Urban Informal Sector* (2006). Many others (Bhowmik 2005; Bonner 2008; Chamane 2009; First International and Third Latin American Conference of Waste-Pickers 2008; Samson 2003; Özgen 2001; Chikarmane and Narayan 2009; Beukering et al. 1996; Medina 2009; Kuria and Muasya 2010) show in their study the contributions of WPPs to society in many ways. They argue that even-though WPPs occupy low economic and social statuses, they make noticeable contributions to society. WPPs constitute a very crucial component in the waste management system of developing countries. Hayami's study, for example, shows that, “they (WPPs) are making valuable contributions to

society by converting unusable waste into productive resources as well as cleaning the city” (2006: 42). As this quotation shows us, WPPs pick up wastes, which otherwise have no value, in public places and send these wastes to recovery industry on the one hand. Cleaning the city is another visible contribution of WPPs to society in Delhi on the other hand. Absent their contributions, the wastes they collect will be thrown into the public places such as streets, parks, and so on. Uncollected wastes contribute on the one hand environment pollution and on the other hand there bear a cost to carry these wastes from public areas to landfills.

Martin Medina examines the Third World cities' lack of waste collection from public areas in his study, *Waste Picker Cooperatives in Developing Countries* (1998). Medina examines mostly Third World cities in Asian and Latin American countries. He argues that the problems of waste management in Third World cities have some characteristics that differentiate them from those of more industrialized countries. For example, “Most Third World cities do not collect the totality of wastes they generate. Despite spending 30 to 50% of their operational budgets on waste management, Third World cities only collect between 50 to 80% of the refuse generated” (1998:2). From this point of view, he concludes the inequalities of waste management in Third World cities “create income opportunities for unskilled workers, particularly the poor” (Medina 1998: 3). So the absence or lack of effective municipal waste collection not only creates job for WPPs in Istanbul but also in developing countries. The importance of waste pickers in developing countries is crucial. Medina argues, “Recycling of municipal solid wastes in developing countries relies largely on the informal recovery of materials from waste carried out by waste pickers. It has been estimated that in developing country cities up to 2% of the population survives by scavenging” (1998:8).

Kuria and Muasya examine the position of Waste pickers per municipalities such as, Kisumu, Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nakuru (2010). For example, “the Municipal Council of Kisumu acknowledges that it is able to manage only 20 percent of the total waste in Kisumu, and therefore recognizes the role of the waste pickers by giving them recognition letters and work permits” (Kuria and Muasya 2010:10). This example indicates that the importance of waste pickers is being recognized particularly in developing countries. The lack of waste management makes inroad to

survival of poor in the cities.

2.2.The Structure of Informal Occupations

Almost 40 years ago the International Labour Organization (ILO) first used the term of “informal sector”. The ILO's report, *Decent Work and the Informal Economy*, describes the informal sector as the “activities of the working poor who were working hard but who were not recognized, recorded, protected or regulated by the public authorities” (2002b: 1). The ILO adds that, “the term 'informal economy' has come to be widely used instead to encompass the expanding and increasingly diverse group of workers and enterprises in both rural and urban areas operating informally” (2002b: 2).

I refer to WPP as an informal occupation. I will use Poornima Chikarmane and Lakshmi Narayan's, researchers in Committee for Asian Women Center, conceptualization that, “... the term ‘informal’ refers to those who generally make a living from solid waste but are not formally in charge of providing the service, i.e. having contracts with a municipality or being paid by it.” From this point of view, I would like to make it clear why do I use informal occupation to describe WPPs as an informal occupation status. When I use informal occupation, I do not mean flexible and atypical works. Flexible shift workers includes home workers, temporary and part-time workers as well. However, we cannot call all flexible workers informal. The ILO's report shows that there is a different between flexible workers who perform informal work and those who perform formal work. ILO states that, “...in advanced industrialized countries, temporary and part-time workers and tele-workers operating from home are normally covered by labour and social security legislation. However, casual workers, subcontractors and agency workers often do not have labour and social protection” (2002b: 2). Informal occupations and their status in advanced countries are better than in developing and transition countries. Most of the time they are not recognized or protected by authorities. They do not have any health insurance or social protections.

Another ILO report, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*, aims to provide a statistical picture of the informal economy in the world (2002a). This report includes the size of the informal economy, the proportion of

women and men in the informal economy and the components of the informal economy worldwide. This report shows several occupations in the informal economy, such as, “street vendors in Mexico City; push-cart vendors in New York city; rickshaw pullers in Calcutta; jeepney drives in Manila; garbage collectors on Bogota; and roadside barbers in Durban” (ILO 2002a: 11). These occupational groups are the more visible group of informal economy. These groups of people earn their livelihood in the informal sector. All these disadvantage groups do not have social rights, social protection, health insurance, and social security. Their income is not stable like WPPs in Istanbul. Social rights and legislations do not cover them.

Some groups who work in the informal economy are less visible, even invisible. Some examples of less visible informal workers include, “On the street-corner of most cities, towns, or villages, even in residential areas, are countless small kiosks or stalls that sell goods of every conceivable kind. Down the crowded lanes of most cities, towns, or villages are small workshops that repair bicycles and motorcycles; recycle scrap metal; make furniture and metal parts; tan leather and stitch shoes; weave, dye, and print cloth; polish diamonds and other gems; make and embroider garments; sort and sell cloth, paper, and metal waste; and more” (ILO 2002a: 9). This work occurs in the back of the shops and a small entrepreneur workshop, that is why, their visibility have an important issue in this stage. Like other informal occupation groups their work conditions include hazardous health problems, very little social protections, unstable income, and also terrible working environments. Waste Picking covers invisible workers in its sector as well. Gender plays a role in this stage as an family job, women segregate the wastes, which their husbands or father gather the waste. Even they have significant effort in recycling and segregating process in this occupation their being is not considered. The women who work at home as custom manufacturer, seasonal agricultural workers, and denim sandblasters are other examples for invisible informal workers in Istanbul.

There are less visible informal workers in the informal economy too. According to the ILO report (2002a) the majority of this group are women. This group sells or produces some things from their homes. Such as, “Garment makers; embroiderers; incense-stick rollers; cigarette-rollers; paper bag makers; hair band makers; food processors; and others” (ILO 2002a: 9). These informal occupational groups are not

only confined to the developing countries but can also be found in developed countries. Some of these occupations are to be found around the world, such as, shoemakers in Istanbul and in Madrid, garment workers in Toronto and in China, too. The ILO states that, “most workers in the informal economy share one thing in common: the lack of formal labour and social protection”(2002a: 9). From this point of view, WPPs are, absolutely, the most visible informal workers in Istanbul and *the lack of formal labour and social protection* is one of their most important characteristics.

I will use the ILO's report on the informal economy and informal sector to explain the structure of informal occupations. In these report, we can see the description of informal economy, which is in the informal sector and explanation of why this informal economy is still getting growing all over the world (2002b). This report will help me to understand the inner dynamics of informal economy/sector in the world. However, there is no clear split between the informal and formal economy, with the help of the ILO report, I will show how we can understand this thin line between informality and formality. In the second chapter of this ILO report, the authors seek to uncover the diversity, size and importance of the informal sector. So, it will help me to know the diversity of informal sector whether WPPs are in this diversity or not. According to this knowledge, I will demonstrate the importance of WPPs to the city's waste management and the contributions of WPPs to the environmental quality of Istanbul. Chapter three explores the importance of the informal economy in the work. It states that, “... rights at work are as meaningful in the informal as in the formal economy.” (2002b: 8) The labour legislation of Turkey will be considered and according to this legislation, I will try to show WPP's situation whether they have rights or not. In fourth chapter of this report, it can be seen how critical the social protection for those in the informal economy. WPPs face a very dangerous occupational environment. They have very close contact with chemical hazards and other harmful substances. Thus, inadequate and lack of social protection of informal sector workers, especially for WPPs in hazardous work, make very serious health problems to this group. Thus, this report will help me to analyze the health problem of WPPs and how social protection can make their life easier.

Diversity of working groups make up the informal economy. Thus, it is better to

show that what kind of groups there are and what is the different between them. These groups are “differ in terms of type of production unit and type of employment status” (ILO 2002b: 2). Firstly and most important group for us to understand WPP's employment status is 'own-account workers in survival-type activities'. For example, “street vendors, shoe shiners, garbage collectors and scrap- and rag-pickers” (ILO 2002b: 2), these group and their activities can identify as an informal occupations. Laws or legal authorities do not recognize them. As we see here, WPPs are one of the own-account workers in survival-type activity. Secondly, “paid domestic workers employed by households; home workers and workers in sweatshops who are ‘disguised wage workers’ in production chains; and the self-employed in micro enterprises operating on their own or with contributing family workers or sometimes apprentices/ employees” (ILO 2002b: 2). Informal occupations differ in some ways because their needs are different. The ILO explains the difference and their circumstances between those group, saying; “for those who engaged in survival activities, for home workers, whose employment relationship with an employer is not recognized or protected, and for the self-employed and employers, who face various barriers and constraints to setting up and operating formal enterprises” (2002b: 2-3).

The main characteristics of other informal occupations fit WPPs as well. ILO's (2002b) description of informal occupational groups list:

- ⤴ They are not recognized or protected under the legal and regulatory frameworks.
- ⤴ They receive little or no legal or social protection and are unable to enforce contracts or have security of property rights.
- ⤴ They do not have effective representation and have little or no voice to make their work recognized and protected.
- ⤴ They are excluded from or have limited access to public infrastructure and benefits.
- ⤴ They are highly dependent on the attitudes of the public authorities, as well as the strategies of large formal enterprises, and their employment is generally highly unstable and their incomes very low and irregular.
- ⤴ The higher percentages of people working in the informal

relative to the formal economy are poor.

Although there are small differences between informal occupations structure, most of the informal occupations are look like to each other. From the ILO's general characteristic of informal groups show us that WPPs and other informal occupations have a little access to have social protection and labour rights. Even these groups have significant contributions to the economy and society, their rights are not recognized by authorities (Charmes 2000; Bonner 2008; Daza 2005). The absence of recognition in their occupation does not give them a chance to shape the legislation or make their contributions visible. And also this absence leads to have no representation in public area. Stigmatization and exploitation are the main characteristic circumstances in their life. Especially, because of their work environment, tools of picking are considered dirty and nasty; WPPs suffer exploitation, social stigmatization and so “almost all of them lack adequate social security protection, organization and a voice at work” (Daza 2005:1) in every stage of their life.

2.3. Migration and WPPs

The lack of employment in rural areas has pushed people out of their places of origins to search for jobs in cities (Bhowmik 2005). Migrants are a main group of people who work in the informal economy. Sharit K Bhowmik, dean of the School of Management and Labour Studies at the Tata Institute of Social Studies in Mumbai, states that, “... migrants do not possess the skills or the education to enable them to find better paid, secure employment in the formal sector and they have to settle for work in the informal sector” (2005: 2256). Further, the author shows that migrants constitute the vast majority of informal sector. The general idea is that most of the WPP are migrants, too. Hayami et al. (2006), examine the social and economic characteristic of pickers in their study. They argue, one of the most important characteristics of pickers is that they are mostly migrants. Additionally, Scheinberg and Anschütz, advisers on Urban Environment and Development, Gouda, the Netherlands, state that, “In many countries waste pickers belong to minorities or are internal migrants ...” (2005: 657). The data of Hayami et al. show that waste pickers in Delhi, “none of the pickers originated in Delhi and only one collector was born in

this city as a son of a migrant, and as much as many as 89% of pickers and 94% of the collectors came from rural areas” (2006: 6). Further studies indicate that informal workers and especially WPPs belong to recent migrants (Kuria and Muasya 2010; Medina 2009). As these studies show us, migrants perform waste picking / collecting / recycling in developing countries when they come from rural areas to urban space.

Pieter van Beukering, Edwin Schoon and Ajit Mani (1996), researchers for the Institute for Environment and Development in London, examined waste recovery in a developing country in Bombay, India. These authors gave general information about waste recovery, waste management and the actors involved in the waste paper sector (1996). In their study, they interviewed 60 waste pickers, 23 male and 37 female. Their research shows that “waste picking is ... resorted to by new immigrants to the city...” (1996: 9), and “practically all the respondents were migrants” (1996: 10). These findings support Huisman’s earlier study (1994). Chikarmane and Narayan (2009) examine the profiles and organization of waste pickers in India, Thailand, and the Philippines. They argue that in India almost all waste pickers are under 45 years age and 97% are migrants (2009: 31) Neşe Özgen (2001) shows in her study, *Kentte Yeni Yoksulluk ve Çöp İnsanları / New Urban Poverty and Street Waste Pickers*, that the majority of waste pickers of Denizli and Samsun provinces of Turkey are migrants. From that information I predict that most of the WPPs in Istanbul are migrants. Some of these migrants were forced to leave their place of origin, others come to Istanbul willingly.

Another group of people is forced to join Waste picking. They are workers who had a formal job before starting this sector. Scheinberg and Anshütz observe the reasons that drive people to join this occupation in their study and they argue that, “general developments in the economy can have an impact on waste picking, since unemployment and loss of livelihood or shelter in other sectors generally drives new entrants into waste picking” (2005: 657). Because of easy entry of this occupation, after being unemployed, these groups of people start to this occupation to make a live. This group of people can be depict that people who “were earlier employed in the formal sector, they lost their jobs because of closures, down-sizing or mergers in the industries...” (Bhowmik 2005: 2256).

Pieter van Beukering et al. (1996) state that, “the individuals operating as waste

pickers in Bombay originate from various groups, such as runaway children, migrants or unemployed labourers” (1996: 9). Martin Medina states, “The informal recovery of material from waste represents an important survival strategy for disadvantaged populations throughout the world” (1998: 1). The majority of waste pickers comprise the bottom layer in the economic system (Hayami et al. 2006), constituting disadvantaged and vulnerable segments of the population (Medina, 1998).

We see a strong relationship between migration and the informal economy, especially with WPPs. Almost all writers note the impact of migration on WPP. Migrants are a main disadvantaged group who suffers from poverty and lack of decent work in the cities. I mean by decent work, work which has social security by legislation, health insurance, social rights and is recognized by authorities, another saying, formal work. That is why, the requirements of gaining in the waste picking occupation looks very comfortable / reasonable for migrants. Poor labour conditions, chemical risks, the social status, exploitation, and social stigmatization are not the main issue for disadvantaged groups. In developing countries, in undeveloped countries and even in developed countries waste picking mostly belong to migrants.

2.4. WPPs in Turkey

Although there are lots of studies about waste paper pickers all over the world, there are few such studies in Turkey. The YÖK (The Council of Higher Education in Turkey) thesis center includes several theses about waste paper pickers in Turkey. For example, both Yusuf Pehlivan (2006) and Neşe Soyer (2004) examine waste paper pickers in their environmental engineering theses; these studies, however, neither mention the role of the informal sector nor give any information about the people who survive through this job. Rather, they examine waste paper pickers and waste management systems in developed countries from an environmental engineering standpoint. A few other studies have been done about waste paper pickers and their working conditions in Turkey, but they provide only limited literature and information about waste paper pickers and even less about waste paper picker organizations in Turkey. However, Gören Ceren Deniz's master thesis (2010), which examines the informal waste collection sector and waste pickers in Ankara, focuses

on the informal waste sector's organization and its inner dynamics. This thesis is especially helpful for my thesis because she conducted interviews with paper pickers who are forced migrants in the Turkozu area of Ankara.

Most of the studies about WPPs have connection with migration and its consequences in the cities of Turkey. This relationship is also embraced by H. Neşe Özgen, in her studies. Deniz (2010) argues in her master thesis, “the literature in Turkey conceptualizes waste pickers as a category of urban poor or utilizes the analysis of waste picking as a tool to understand urban poverty” (41). This view can be seen in Özgen's (2010) article too. “New Urban Poverty” is related with WPPs in many studies. Sibel Yardimci and Ali Saltan examine the perception of 'new urban poverty' in their study, *Sokak Toplayıcılarının İş ve Yaşam Koşulları Üzerine / On the Work and Life Conditions of Street Pickers* (2007). Likewise, Cem Ergun (2005) wrote in his master thesis, *Poverty and Informal Sector: Garbage Collectors (Isparta-Izmir Comparison)*, that 'urban poverty' is directly related with the informal sector. He described WPPs as “new informal / par venue sector” (2005: 85).

Apart from these academic studies, most information about WPPs has been triggered by news, Internet, and broadcast channels. Exploring their life, their job, stories, and situations in media have been objects of interest. For example, while I was doing this research, there were two news about WPPs in media; “Kağıt Toplayıcılarından Van'a Destek / The Aid from WPPs to Earthquake Victims” and “Çöpçü Diplomat! / Scavenger Diplomat!” These news stories give positive side and indicate contributions of WPPs to their society. However, most news about WPPs do not draw an optimistic picture. As Deniz Goren Ceren mentioned in her study, “the news has been mostly about police attacks towards waste pickers, on the streets and their warehouses” (2010:43).

There is a blog page about WPPs, *Ankara Waste Pickers Association*, which includes a few sources, articles, pictures, and news about WPPs. In this blog, some studies are translated from English to Turkish. On the home page of this blog the main goal of association is stated as follow, “Ankara Waste Pickers Association was founded in 2005 in order to strengthen Ankara's street waste pickers, to work for their recognition, the improvement of their working and living conditions; it also intends to bring solutions for their inclusion in the city's solid waste management

system.” As far as I understood, the main goal of this blog is give the idea of association, and with the some examples from other countries and their experiences of how they became an association to the waste pickers in Turkey.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This thesis focuses on internal migrants who came to Istanbul and now work as Waste Paper Pickers (WPP) in different neighborhoods of Istanbul. My research focused on semi-permanent residents, especially those voluntary and involuntary migrants who came to Istanbul because of economic and political difficulties in their home city, village or regions.

I used participant observation and participant interview techniques to gather data and investigate WPPs' occupational strategies, inner-dynamics, everyday life, reasons for joining this activity, relationships with other actors in the occupation, why some WPPs remain in this activity instead of leaving, and why they chose an informal occupation. These research questions were investigated through the sociological research methods of depth interview and participant observation. Questions such as why WPPs remain in this occupation; what is the role of warehouse owners in the occupation; what channels of communications are important for WPPs; and what kinds of Compatriot / Friendship / Kinship relations facilitate joining this occupation, can be addressed successfully through observation and interviews. Further, those push and pull factors, which direct people to join this informal occupational sector, can well be examined through participant observation and depth interview techniques.

To obtain answers for these questions, observation or any other techniques would provide insufficient information about current condition; for instance, the migrant status of WPPs cannot be known by their physical appearance since almost all WPPs seem physically alike.

I thought and discussed with my thesis adviser about other methods, especially quantitative research methods, for data gathering. I doubted about finding WPPs as a survey interviewer. One can see them in almost every street of Istanbul; however talking and getting their time is quite complex. Therefore, my first concern was focused on the difficulty of finding participants to fill out a survey. The tactics, maneuvers and inner-dynamics of WPPs cannot be adequately understood through

surveys alone.

Cem Ergun (2005) used both qualitative and quantitative techniques in his thesis, *Poverty and Informal Sector: Garbage Collectors (Isparta - İzmir Comparison)*. He interviewed 90 Waste Pickers in Isparta and Izmir in Turkey. In his thesis, he reports differences between Waste Pickers and other informal occupation groups, including gender and educational level: most Waste Pickers he studied are men and with low education levels (Ergun 2005). Gören Ceren Deniz (2010) conducted research about Waste Pickers in two neighborhoods of Ankara, using semi-structured and unstructured interviews with 20 Waste Pickers.

I audio recorded some of my interviews, while for others I wrote extensive field notes after the interviews. During my participant observations, I took short notes while in the field then wrote extensive notes when I returned home. These interviews, observations and notes provide the data for my study of this informal occupation. By analyzing these recordings and deciphering the responses to my questions, I tried to answer several questions: (1) why people choose this occupational sector instead of getting a more structured, formal, permanent job; (2) what are the living and working conditions of WPPs in Istanbul; (3) what are the relations between WPPs and other actors in the waste collecting and recycling sector; and, (4) what are the experiences and reflections of WPPs' current situations.

Using more formally structured interviews, I thought, would hamper WPPs in telling their stories, recounting their daily routines, and describing those events that have importance for WPPs during their work activity in the field. Directing the conversations of WPPs would not be as useful a tactic in terms of gathering first hand and vivid data that comes from observations of and their accounts of their work and life experiences than less structured, more informant-driven conversations.

Gathering data about the world of these WPPs, one unknown to strangers and observers, I thought, would be less useful through structured questions or survey techniques than data generated by unstructured interviews and participant observation. Thus, having this information in mind, I planned to participate as much as possible in the daily routines of WPPs, to observe their interaction among each other, and to interview WPPs in different places and times in their field of action.

WPPs are mostly mobile workers, working individually, and with adaptable

working hours. There is a difference between acting and speaking. How people act and speak often portray different things. With a participant observation technique, I shifted my attention away from the way these people talk, but focused instead on their activities in the field; this is one of the strengths of my data. Coming to know firsthand the WPPs' work condition, their stories based on their own words and observing their actions lets me develop an insider's view of their lives and work. From their accounts of events from their daily routine and my observation of those activities, I then categorized those stories and events into a smaller number of themes.

This research talks and listens to WPPs in their work places. Elliot Liebow, an anthropologist, pointed out in his research on lower-class American people he studies that; "... they are breadwinner, father, husband, lover and friend" (2003:7). Liebow reminds us that seeing WPPs only as scavengers or waste pickers - that is to focus entirely on their occupational choices and activities - would not give us valid and reliable data on WPPs as persons and actors. WPPs are construction workers, daily laborers, retired men and women, children, students, unskilled workers. They are at the same time fathers, brothers, husbands, wives, sons and friends. I attempted not to see them only as my research objects, but also, over time, as workers and friends.

3.2. Generating a Sample

When I decided to do this research, the question of locating WPPs appeared. I learned by trial and error that making connection with WPPs is not as easy as it seems. I attempted several times to talk with some of them; however, I was rejected most of the time. Therefore, I used social network channels and the snowball technique to locate WPPs.

Social network channels are used to reach people who were interested in WPPs' current situation. For instance, I became a Facebook friend with Ali Mendilliođlu, chairman of the Recyclers Workers Association², editor of KATIK³, and a columnist for Dipnot Tablet⁴, in order to access those people interested in WPPs. Medilliođlu

² Geri Dönüşüm İşçileri Derneđi

³ Geri Dönüşüm İşçileri Dergisi

⁴ A weekly Turkish and English Magazine

has a wide range of friends both from associations and individuals concerned about WPPs. However, I thought, choosing respondents primarily through the association links would not connect me to people who would tell me explicitly about their inner-dynamics or, since they would be connected through the association, and Warehouse Owners they would all tell me same things. I thought there is not only one specific dynamic, which can be seen anywhere, but there are different circumstances that need to be paid attention. Such as, after spending some time with independent WPPs, I realized, there is different pricing of wastes in same neighborhood. However, if I have done my research with dependents one, I could not see these kinds of differences. I preferred interaction with seemingly independent WPPs. I purposely use ‘seemingly’ because it is hard to define whether a worker is dependent or independent or to identify people’s location on the independence continuum. I preferred independent WPPs, because they could freely spend some time out of the work. However, dependent WPPs, especially who have to work for a Warehouse Owner has much more responsibilities than do independent ones.

I used a snowball sample technique where respondents would refer me to others with whom they were acquainted and thus help me identify other WPPs who might be willing to serve as respondents for my research. I assumed that it would be difficult to develop trust with WPPs; therefore, I planned to cope this problem by asking previous interviewers whether they knew other WPPs with whom I could contact and if they would refer me to them.

Neither WPPs nor neighborhoods were selected based on previous knowledge. As in Liebow’s research, my interaction with my respondents was not due to their pre-selection based on predetermined criteria; rather, “the focus on these particular men at this particular place came about, in large part, through accident” (2003: 8). I do not mean all these data have been gathered ‘accidentally’ in the field, but my research took place in central neighborhoods of Istanbul, such as Beşiktaş, Beyoğlu, Avcılar, Ortaköy, and Kadıköy in order to get the information about WPPs occupational dynamics; these neighborhoods were selected because I found informants there.

My research locales includes under the bridge of Beşiktaş Square, on the streets of Avcılar, in Cennet Mahallesi (a neighborhood in Küçükçekmece in İstanbul), in the

streets of Beyoğlu, in the Fındıklı Park in Beyoğlu, in Karaköy, and in other areas of Beşiktaş. The majority of my data were gathered from two-dozen men, two women, and 2 warehouse owners in the field. The major body of the data is recorded in the streets of Istanbul, restaurants, beerhouses, beaches, local parks, buses, warehouses, and under the bridge. I talked, waited and hung out with WPPs almost 16 months, from the spring of 2011 to the summer of 2012.

I went to cheap restaurants with Baba⁵ (I paid for many of our meals), went to a tobacco shop with Ali, walked the streets with Bayer, and drank tea with Sedat. I worked for a while with Baba⁶ in the field as a WPP. Whenever I walked with him in the streets, I helped him collect wastes in total; I worked one day and night with him. My cousin and I went to a party thrown by Aslan Parçası⁷'s son, who entered the army in February 2012. During the party, I met with Aslan Parçası's family and participated in traditional dancing with his family members and with others. I was treated like a member of the family. I am telling this not because I was invited but also, it is kind a tradition that, for such party not everyone is invited. To be in their party not only meant that I was his friend but also that we became family-friend. After that day, whenever he passed my home street, he rings my doorbell and asks about my health. I visited Kirli⁸ in his home, where I got lice and, therefore, itched for a week. Each time I went to Beşiktaş, I called Bıktım⁹ or Baba to have a drink together as a friend. I did not want to interrupt their daily routines and or their work in the field. We sometimes hung around, sat down, ate lunch or dinner, smoked cigarettes, drank tea (although they drank beer or wine most of the time), and collected wastes. Each time I met the WPPs, I left my computer in the Bahçeşehir University library, which is ten meters from the bridge where I met WPPs who work around Besiktas, Karaköy and Ortaköy.

I spent nearly a year with my informants and during that time I shared my experiences with Allen Scarborough, my thesis adviser, who encouraged me to do this research and said, 'you are the one who stands between the WPPs and your readers.'

⁵ All the names of Waste Paper Pickers are pseudonyms in order to protect their identity.

⁶ After a while, I, like the other WPPs, began to call him Baba [Father] He was the man who took care of other WPPs.

⁷ Almost always, he called me 'Aslan Parçası' [a peace of Lion].

⁸ Kirli means 'dirty'. I chose this nickname, because he was the dirtiest WPP I interviewed.

⁹ Everybody called him Bıktım 'I feel stuffed'.

I understood from this sentence that my mission in this study is to observe and to listen to WPP's stories then write what I hear and understand to the reader. Scarborough told me, 'do not go there with certain things in your mind, just go and feel free, hang around with them, you will find your way, then you will grow with this observation'. Furthermore, he warned me to go to the police and to explain to them what I was doing with those men. Otherwise the police might suspect me. Most importantly, the director of the research suggested a book to help me comprehend how to do fieldwork. It became my pillow book. Elliot Liebow's *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Street Corner Men* served as a model for my research. "Getting the feel of things" is the first step, says Liebow (2003) in his study. I understood from this sentence that, as Dorothy Smith, says, "the only way of knowing a socially constructed world is knowing it from within" (2004: 389). As far as I understood from those quotations, 'getting the feel of things' is the way of knowing the socially constructed world from within. So, I tried to "get the feel of things, poke around and lay out the lines of my field work" (Liebow, 2003:154). I tried never to give money to them, even though I twice bought a bottle of wine for Baba and Ali, as well as some beers for Baba and some cigarettes, too. In one of my conversation with Baba he insistently pointed out that,

"Why did you buy a bottle of wine for us yesterday night? We had already bought two. I discussed with Ali after you left. I know he asked you to buy a wine. I know you are student, okay, we are friends here but 10 lira is much for a student."

I would like to draw out some implications about this quotation. As I see it, WPPs don't want to be seen as a kind people who are freeloaders looking for someone that can be taken advantages of. In addition, he shows that he is aware of both his and my situation, that he is a WPP and I am a researcher and at the same time a student. Baba, acting out his nickname, is showing that he regrets his friends asking me to buy something. It is like father-kid relationship: when the kid does something childish, Baba takes the father role and apologizes on behalf of his kid. Thus, this quotation indicates more than a money-information relation, but indicates as well how he acts in the field. I mean with money-information relation that some other WPPs were not willing to talk with me unless if I paid them to talk. Therefore, buying something for WPPs doesn't mean to give them money but to talk with me

but as a 'gift' relation (Mauss 1967).

From the beginning, I tried to build reliable conversations with the WPPs. They knew I was student who just wanted to listen to their stories. During the course of my fieldwork, our conversations improved, and they started see me not as a stranger but as a friend. I am not heavy smoker; however, each time I met with one of WPP, I bought a box of cigarettes to offer. Sharing my cigarettes with WPPs, I realized, was building a kind of 'giving and taking' process among us. I shared my cigarettes with them so they shared their experience with me. This process did not happened in a planned way, but coincidentally.

Liebow describes his first days when he decided to go out and get 'his feet wet'. Liebow says, "...after three of four weeks there was still plenty of suspicion and mistrust" (2003: 157-58). Similar to his description of his interactions with his informants, when I went to WPPs and asked about their daily routine and inner dynamics over the first two weeks, they thought that I was with the police. So, my plan was talking to them several times.

As Liebow did, I attempted to demolish my role as an outsider. Furthermore, as Liebow expresses it, "the people I was observing knew that I was observing them"(2003: 164). From this understanding, I explained to them many times that I am observing their daily routines and doing my job with them. Since I was a researcher in that concern, I faced some inconvenience, for example, police might see me a suspicious. Since WPPs are in the heart of the informal occupational system, and are witnesses to many cases of illegal activities in the streets of Istanbul, my contacts and hanging out with WPPs might lead to some problems from the Police viewpoint. To avoid this problem, I went to the police officers, who are staying under the bridge of the Beşiktaş and introduced myself and explained that I was doing my Master thesis about WPPs. At first, those police did not understand what I was trying to do and telling them. They asked for my ID; I showed both my national ID and Student ID cards.

As I did not want as my informants only a group of Waste Pickers connected with the Recyclers Workers Association, it was hard for me to build trust relationship in the first glance and find participants to talk deeply about their job and the environment of their occupation. So, I attempted to find individual WPPs who work

independently. A major part of my thesis question understands why an individual begin this occupation; this information would be best known by individual independent WPPs. I did not want to make interviews with Waste Pickers, who are controlled by warehouse owners, because, I thought, the warehouse owners would negatively affect those interviews. It was difficult to tape record interviews with all of the WPPs because they feared I would use their talk to develop reasons for arresting them. Others thought I was coming from a newspaper agency and would make news about their lives. I tried to be very clear about my research and my trustworthiness with WPPs. And also, since they are mobile workers, having tape recording at the same time working was not possible. However, my main problem was being thought as a Police officer.

I found it difficult to get in touch with female WPPs. Because of our gender difference, I could not conduct participant observation with female WPPs. With the help of a female friend, I made two interviews with women WPPs. However, limited information was gathered from them. I believe developing comprehensive data about women WPPs (their reasons to begin this occupation, how they communicate with male warehouse owners, what happened after they start this job, and their role in the family) are significant questions that need to be examined. However, only two interviews, in a limited time, and meeting female WPPs only one time, does not produce data of the quality necessary to address these issues of female WPPs and their situation. What I can say, clearly, is that female WPPs do not work alone as independent workers in this sector. Each time I saw a woman WPP, she was working with someone, maybe a son, a brother, or a husband. Therefore, I could not build a depth interview with female WPPs.

3.3. Gathering Qualitative Data

Elliot Liebow, in his *Tally's Corner*, demonstrates the magnitude of the issue of data gathering, especially data gathering by interview and participant observation. Liebow states, "...lower class persons are less tractable to interview and questionnaire techniques than are persons in the middle and upper strata" (2003: 5). Since WPPs form a marginal and lower class occupational group in Istanbul, I faced the same problem in my research; thus my first goal was to build relationships based

on mutual trust before speaking of deeper issues. I kept in mind Liebow's research with the black street-corner men in Washington's inner city during the early 1960's as a model for my thesis.

Like Liebow, I was looking for a place where I could find WPPs willing to talk with me and to make connections. At the beginning of my research I was using the Bahçeşehir University library as a place to study for the courses I was taking at my own university. I chose that library because it is located in heart of Beşiktaş; its book and electronic collections are one of best in Istanbul; transportation is easy; the library offers free internet connection; and it was close to my -then-girl friend's university, making it convenient for our meetings for coffee or lunch. The library is open weekdays from 8:00 to 24:00, on Saturdays from 9:00 to 18:00, and on Sundays from 10:00 to 17:00. From these points of view, Beşiktaş became a door for me to enter into the world of WPPs.

Under the Beşiktaş Bridge, where the buses are going down from Yıldız (a neighborhood in Istanbul) slope to their stops at the port or cars are trying to pass in the Ortaköy direction (under bridge), lies a very different kind of life. I had seen WPPs many times under the bridge of Beşiktaş but it was not easy to talk with them. I tried a couple of times to talk with them in other places but they refused to talk with me. Then I saw three men under the bridge on Besiktas Square, drinking beer and chatting. They were sitting on the wastes they had collected around the Beşiktaş neighborhood. While they were smoking and chatting¹⁰, I approached them and introduced myself as a student at Fatih University, doing my masters degree. I told them I wanted to talk with them if it was not a problem. I told them about my research. They seemed suspicious. Actually they were right in their suspicions: from my understanding of their situation, nobody (ordinary people) sees them or wants to see WPPs. They asked me if I were a policeman. If one wants to meet WPPs, there should be a reason and they asked what my reason was. So I introduced myself and showed them my ID. I showed my ID intentionally, because I think it is necessary to build a reliable relationship before starting conversation for my research. I explained that I was studying WPPs' lives and stories for my research project. Then, they

¹⁰ They were speaking Turkish.

welcomed me, showed me a place to sit and let me join their conversation.

The population of Beşiktaş changes between the night and daytime. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, the population of Beşiktaş in 2012 was 186,067¹¹. However these figures account only for permanent residents. Scattered throughout Beşiktaş are 7 universities as well as offices, Beşiktaş Stadium, Dolmabahçe Palace, five-star hotels, restaurants, the prime minister's private work offices, museums, and ferry services, so the transient population is much higher than the residential population. Beşiktaş is located on the European side of the Bosphorus. Beşiktaş is very close to Taksim on the south with Üsküdar directly across the Bosphorus. This is an important location not only in term of daily life, but historically, too. There are many historical places both in Beşiktaş and near neighborhoods. For example, the Maiden's Tower in the Üsküdar neighborhood and the Golden Horn in the Fatih neighborhood are two places that are historically importance for Istanbul. Both are visible from Besiktas; in many ways, Besiktas is one of Istanbul's important hubs. We can understand that Beşiktaş is a very suitable place to access.

Beyoğlu, Fındıklı, Ortaköy, Avcılar, and Kadıköy have some of the same features as Besiktas. They are each main neighborhoods of Istanbul, each characterized by easy accessibility, high population density, a large amount of wastes, and locations near the center of İstanbul.

These neighborhoods are not similar only in terms of population density, historically and in the center of Istanbul but also show similarities in the production of waste. So, the similarity of high consumption, which leads to generating much garbage in these places, creates work opportunities for WPPs. The greater the population, the more wastes produced for WPPs to gather and sell. This is the key reason for me to focus on these neighborhoods.

I talked and hung around with WPPs. For each meeting, after two or three hours of chatting, I left and went to the library to write field notes; I carried a small notebook to note some details while they were talking or to write down interesting events that I witnessed during day. Sometimes, with their permission, I tape recorded

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http://rapor.tuik.gov.tr/reports/rwservlet?adnksdb2&ENVID=adnksdb2Env&report=wa_turkiye_ilce_koy_sehir.RDF&p_il1=34&p_ilce1=1183&p_kod=2&p_yil=2012&p_dil=1&desformat=html.

our conversations and photographed my informants as they talked to me.

I asked WPPs gently for permission to photograph and to go to the field with them and gather wastes from the streets of Istanbul. Although I did not have a set list of questions, some basic general questions directed my interviews.

- How old are you?
- What is your education level?
- Are you married? If yes, how long have you been married? If yes, how many children do you have?
- What are their (children's) education levels?
- Where did you come from to Istanbul? Did they come in a single move or were there stops on the way? How was the decision to move made? Who was involved in the decision? What factors were considered? Did the move meet expectations?
- What is the story of your starting this work?
How many years have you been doing this work?
- How did you find this work? (I wanted to know if they found it through observation, friends, relative, family and who made the contacts for starting job).
- In a typical day and week, how many hours/days do you work?
- What is the story of how you interact with others—bystanders, residents, and passersby— as you are working? (I wondered if people looked at them in evil-look, humiliate, nothing, physical injury or stay away from them).
- What is your health condition?
- What are some of your interesting memories of a workday?
- What is your daily and monthly income?
- Have you ever voted?
- What are your futures plans? What do you see in next 5 years? Do you think your occupation field will be better then than now?
- What do you think when you see police forces?

These questions were not structured from the outside but arose during the

participation. As Liebow explained, “They were ‘natural’ questions that arouse spontaneously and directly out of the social situation” (1993:321).

3.4. Conclusion on Method

During my fieldwork, the WPPs’ education level, migration stories, aspects of occupation, reasons for beginning this job, memories of their daily-routine, their relations with their family / warehouse owners / police, people who helped them to join this occupation, price of solid waste items, price of their hand-truck, who sells to whom, and general attitudes of them about this occupation were the main issues that we discussed in my year-long study.

My method gave me a great opportunity to participate in the world of these Istanbul WPPs. I tried to see and understand their perceptions and perspectives from their side, not from outside.

I enjoyed my time and the people I met, especially under the bridge of Beşiktaş. I tried to participate in their activities as much as I could. At that time, I had one weekday off from my job in Fatih University. So, every Monday, I went to Beşiktaş and called Salih Baba or any other WPP, asked where they were, and then joined in their activity.

I did not start my research with a clear idea in my mind about WPPs: their world was largely unknown to me; I was unaware of their practices, the ways they collect waste, etc. I did not know what I was looking for, so I did not seek to follow a set of predetermined questions for those particular issues, but day-by-day my notes helped me to see important patterns of their current situation. I thought, having some knowledge before doing research could in some ways negatively affect my research; especially the social and visual media representation of WPPs is unpleasant. Therefore, without having those biases in my mind, I tried out to seek their circumstances in their field.

In the analysis of my data, I will show some implications of what I came across during fieldwork. What looks like coincidence outside the world of WPPs, I understand, with using this method, it is not coincidence. Each step in their daily-life has reasons. For instance, with the naked eye, the way WPPs earn money looks simple, however through my interviews and participant observation within their

world, I now realize that their work contains complex relations and tactics. The channels and media of communications, the role of warehouse owners and other facets became clear through the analysis of the data gathered through the methods of interview and participant observation. Without the methods I used, I could have come with the same results that social or visual media have about WPPs.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of data generated by my fieldwork and interviews with my informants. I recorded 60 pages notes during my fieldwork and I read them several times and identified the main themes that run through the notes. I tried to see what they see is important for them. In what follows, I describe my informants and data from my interviews with and observations of them I start by summarizing information about my informants, including how many informants I interviewed and observed, their gender, age, level of education as well as migrant and ethnic statuses. In addition I list the places I observed and conducted interviews and I introduce each informant

My informants' immigration will be presented in their own words. I tried to see and indicate importance of immigration on this occupation; when and how they immigrated, where they immigrated first, and the impacts of immigration on this occupation's inner dynamics.

After discussing immigration and its effects on these WPPs, I describe the paths by which my informants entered the world of WPPs, and how I entered the world of WPPs as well. I then turn to describing the daily routines my informants follow and outline a typical day of a WPP. The routines and typical days and some tactics used by my informants are critical for understanding the difficulties inherent in this occupation as well as its rewards.

I end by developing a Typologies of WPPs and descriptions of how WPPs interact with each other as well as with people tangential to their daily lives. My typology helps clarify different patterns among WPPs and how different types of WPPs adopt different tactics and experience different outcomes for those tactics.

4.2. Description of the Sample

The demographic background for the WPPs I interviewed provides a snapshot of the people I studied. I interviewed 22 WPPs and two Warehouse Owners (WO): of

my 24 respondents, 22 are male and two are female; both Warehouse Owners were male. The two female informants do not work independently but with family members. Most WPPs are men with few women working in the field. My informants report that their female co-workers typically work at home separating the wastes their family members collect rather than gathering wastes from the streets.

The mean age of my informants is about 34 years old. The two female informants are 16 and 60 years old. Among the male WPPs, Aslan Parçası is the oldest, at 64 years old, while Küçük¹² is the youngest, at 11 years old. Six of my male respondents are under 18 years old.

The twenty-four respondents report educational attainments mostly at the Elementary School level; however, one WPP, Murat¹³, studied at a University, and Kısa¹⁴ has no formal education. Twelve of the respondents attained Elementary School education, while five attained either Middle School or High School education. Among those who reached the High School level, Ali completed High School in Germany. Kirli and Sedat left High School without completion. The two female WPPs reached only the elementary education level.

My interviews were conducted in different neighborhoods of Istanbul. Among the 22 WPPs and 2 WOs, eleven interviews were conducted in Beşiktaş; four in Kadıköy; three in Avcılar; two in Küçükçekmece, and two in Karaköy. While interviews are noted as being conducted in different neighborhoods, the WPPs' work location often changed during the time of the study. Therefore, some interviews occurred in multiple neighborhoods.

I asked my informants about their migration status. Among the 24 respondents, one is an involuntary migrant; four are seasonal migrants; the remainder came to Istanbul as voluntary migrants.

I did not directly ask my informants about their ethnic identification although four voluntarily identified themselves during our interactions as Gypsy¹⁵ or Roma. All

¹² Küçük means 'the small one'. I chose this pseudonym because he was the youngest one that I interviewed.

¹³ The Last time I saw Murat, he was working in a café in Taksim as a waiter. He was not studying due to financial problems.

¹⁴ Kısa means 'short'. I chose this pseudonym because he was shorter than other WPPs and also other WPPs called him with this name.

¹⁵ During the interviews, when asked to describe a typical day for a WPP, each of these four

seasonal migrants conversed with me in Kurdish, indicating a Kurdish ethnic background. In addition, Murat identified himself as Kurdish, too. The remaining study participants seemed to have Turkish backgrounds because the places where they were born and their Turkish accents make me think that they are Turkish.

Although data were gathered from all informants, most of the data analyses are based on the WPPs' daily life in the field. It was not possible to have long conversations with each informant independently; however, with some of the WPPs, such as Baba, Ali, Sedat, and Bıktım, I spent a lot of time. These people were the gate-keepers who allowed me to enter the world of WPPs. In my data analysis, I identified patterns in their conversations that support what I noted during fieldwork. I mostly focused on the migration stories of these WPPs, their reasons for beginning this occupation, the typical day-work of a WPP, and their interaction with each other in the field.

Baba— Baba, now 63 years old, grew up in Izmir although he was born in Eskişehir. He migrated from Izmir to Istanbul at an early age to find a job. He migrated voluntarily. He worked as a truck driver for years and then sold his truck and bought a traditional Turkish tea garden in Istanbul's Kasimpaşa neighborhood. He ran this teashop for years. However, some people caused some unwanted events in his shop in 1991. Under the influence of drugs, they arrived at his traditional tea garden and beat Baba's son. They used knives and injured Baba's son, then Baba took his gun and killed three of them. He was sentenced to 28 years imprisonment and, during 14 years of his imprisonment, he was sent to different jails.

Baba drinks alcohol, which shows in his reddish and swollen face, and his breath smells of Raki¹⁶ and beer. He stands at 1.65-70 in height and he has lost his front teeth; he usually wears a cap. He has two sons: the older is a computer engineer and the younger is studying at a university in Germany. He has three grandchildren. He and his older son live in the same building and from time to time he goes to his house in Beşiktaş Çarşı to clean up. Of my informants, Baba spent the most time under the bridge. When he doesn't go home, he stays under the bridge behind the florist, sleeping in a blanket. He identifies his biggest problem as drinking alcohol and he

informants called themselves Gypsies.

¹⁶ Turkish traditional alcohol often mixed with water.

thinks that his drinking is the reason for his quarrels with his wife. He reports that he sent his wife to Mecca for the pilgrimage and that after that his life began to change. He says, “Before she became a pilgrim, we used to drink together.” His family doesn’t know that he works in this job and that he sleeps in streets. He says, “On the previous day, I was at edge of being caught by my wife, oh fuck, I immediately gave the plastic bag in my hands to Ali. If my eldest son hears that I am picking bottles and paper from rubbish, then the real problem will arise.”

Although Baba is a WPP, he also helps a Simitçi¹⁷ and a Florist¹⁸ while they are temporarily absent from their shops. He sells cigarettes illegally under the bridge. Around the bridge, local people and students know him. He has customers who buy their cigarettes under the bridge.

Sedat— Sedat, at 48 years old, stays in Balat in a house only for singles. He is from İzmir and migrated to İstanbul 21 years ago. He is not a forced migrant but a voluntary migrant coming to Istanbul to find a better job. He walks nearly five kilometres from Balat to Beşiktaş where he works every day. Sedat started to work as a WPP when he was thirteen years old in İzmir and has now been doing this work in Istanbul for four years. He has three sisters and two brothers. He is the eldest in his family. He claims that his family thinks that he is working in a kiraathane¹⁹ as a waiter.

He is 176 cm high with grey hair but looks younger than his age. He rolls his own cigarettes rather than buying. He lights a cigarette every ten minutes, maybe because of talking to me. He has clear Turkish. I mean by clear Turkish that he encapsulates his ideas very unambiguously. When he told his story, he gave examples from newspapers and television programs. I realized that he knows the last 30 years of Turkey's political figures name-by-name and date-by-date.

He graduated from elementary school. He wanted to study more; however, at the age of thirteen, he had to start work due to financial problems that his family had at that time. Sedat is angry that his father didn’t have decent work that would

¹⁷ A kiosk.

¹⁸ After some time, I visited Baba; however he was not there. I asked the Florist if he knew where Baba was. However, he was really angry at Baba and accused him of stealing some money from his kiosk.

¹⁹ Kiraathane: Traditional tea gardens, where people play card games and so on in Turkey.

financially support his kids, and that; therefore, Sedat could not have more education. He says he has not married because he is scared to be like his father. Furthermore, he thinks all the negative circumstances in his life, including his job, are because of his father's irresponsibility.

Ali— He is 41 years old, from Samsun. There is an apparent lump on his lip. He has no front teeth, has a 1.75-80 cm long beard, and has white skin. He does not like talking too much. The first day I met with him, he only said hello. Day by day we became better friends. He asked me for cigarettes and wine several times. When he was one year old, his family migrated to Germany. So he attended elementary and high school in Germany. He knows fluent German and a little English. He left high school after his first year. His parents died in 1992. He was arrested in 1996 due to stabbing someone in Germany. He was in jail for 5 years. After his release, he was sent to Turkey.

He grew up in Germany where he worked for 11 years in a factory. When I saw him under the bridge, he was mostly drinking and doing nothing. After some questions, I learned that he had a problem in his stomach: three holes opened in his stomach due to his drinking too much alcohol. He stayed 10 days in Çapa Hospital, where he underwent surgery for his stomach.

Ali was very willing to talk about his biography. He explained, "I grew up in Germany where I worked for 11 years in a factory. I made a great deal of money. I fought with many guys with my brother owing to a woman. They wounded me so I responded in turn. Not only did Germany give us money but also she took so many things from us [he means from Turkish migrants]. Germany used us for years and then she threw us like a piece of sh... . The jails in Germany are full of Turks—maybe 75% of convicts are Turks—most affected from drugs or alcohol. As you can understand, Germany was not a good choice to migrate. After returning from Germany I had enough money, I opened an eyeglass shop but I did some illegal jobs there. Therefore, I closed the shop after 9 months due to much debt. I then worked in construction; actually I learned construction stuff in Germany. I can do anything about construction. I worked in Levent in 2004 and earned a salary of 1.750 liras a month at that time. I lost my brother who was everything for me. I then began this job. I gather waste beer bottles and papers around Beşiktaş. I earn, as much I need.

Two months ago I had a problem with my stomach. There were 3 holes in my stomach due to drinking too much alcohol. I stayed 10 days in Çapa Hospital where I had surgery on my stomach.”

When he was talking about his stomach, Baba turned to him and said, “Do not forget ‘son’ we will go to doctor tomorrow in order to open your surgery seams.” Ali nodded.

Mesut— Mesut, 34 years old, is from Tokat²⁰. He has been doing this job for 20 years. He works with his father. So, this is a kind of family job. He has three daughters, the eldest is eleven years old, the middle one is ten years old, and the youngest one is three years old. He is 160/165 cm tall; he is a little bit dark, slim and has a kind of cap on his head. He has deep wrinkles on his face. He thinks that dealing with this job for a long time leads to having those wrinkles on his face. He is not stinky and dirty compared to the other people under bridge because he has a family whom he constantly meets. He is not an involuntary migrant; actually his father came here so as to find a job.

Mesut and his father have definite work hours. They try to be at home at 9pm. When other paper pickers hang around and laugh, they work. He is hard working. He said, “I have a family so I have to work hard”.

Bıktım— Bıktım, 45, is from Aksaray in Istanbul. He graduated from Pertevniyal High School²¹ in the Aksaray neighborhood. His height is 170 cm. In my first day under the bridge Ali, Baba and other pickers were talking about how Bıktım funny is. He is a very well known person under the bridge. Especially when he is drunk, he sings songs. Furthermore he is really so gentle to the people. He has close relationships with students. Sometimes students come and talk to him, laugh with him. He has been in Beşiktaş since he was 20 years old. He has worked as a car washer in the Beşiktaş Çarşı

Nesih— Nesih, 19 years old from Şanlıurfa²², has seven brothers and sisters. He is the middle brother. His eldest brother is 23 years old and the youngest is three years old. Three of his siblings graduated from middle school but did not continue on to

²⁰ A Province in the Black Sea region in Turkey.

²¹ Very well known high school in Istanbul.

²² A province in South Eastern Turkey.

high school. His parents have no formal education and live in a village of Şanlıurfa. Nesih graduated from middle school and could not go to high school because of economical insufficiencies his family faced. All young guys of his village have the same kinds of jobs. He has been doing this job for six years. He is proud that his job allows him to send money to his family.

LIST OF WASTE PAPER PICKERS I INTERVIEWED ²³

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Education Level</u>	<u>Place of Interview</u>	<u>Migrant Status</u>
Kirli	56	Left High School	Tarlabası	Voluntary
Aslan	39	Elementary School	Avcılar	Voluntary
Küçük	11	Elementary school	Avcılar	Voluntary
Mert	13	Elementary School	Avcılar	Voluntary
Murat	24	University Student	Taksim	Involuntary
Sinan	34	Left High School	Beşiktaş	Voluntary
Selim	20/Gypsy	Elementary School	Beşiktaş	Voluntary
Erdinç	14/Gypsy	Elementary School	Beşiktaş	Voluntary
Eyüp	12/Gypsy	Elementary School	Beşiktaş	Voluntary
Rezzan (Female)	16/Gypsy	Elementary School	Beşiktaş	Voluntary
Ali	41	High School (Germany)	Beşiktaş	Involuntary
Mesut	34	Elementary School	Beşiktaş	Voluntary
Kısa	62	No Formal Education	Beşiktaş	Voluntary
Bıktım	45	High School	Beşiktaş	Voluntary
Aslan Parçası	64	High School	Küçükçekmece	Voluntary
Ayşe (Female)	60	Elementary School	Küçükçekmece	Voluntary
Nesih	19/Kurd	Middle School	Kadıköy	Involuntary
Baran	19/Kurd	Middle School	Kadıköy	Involuntary
Ersin	19/Kurd	Middle School	Kadıköy	Involuntary
Ahmet	13/Kurd	Middle School	Kadıköy	Involuntary

²³ All names are pseudonyms.

Salih (WO)	50	Middle School	Karaköy	Voluntary
Zeki (WO)	37	Elementary School	Karaköy	Voluntary
Sedat	48	Elementary School	Beşiktaş	Voluntary
Baba	63	Elementary School	Beşiktaş	Voluntary

4.3. Immigration Story of WPPs

All my informants are migrants who came to Istanbul, each for different reasons, such as economical insufficiencies, forced displacement, pull factors of Istanbul and push factors of place of origin. Immigration has a crucial importance for understanding WPPs' occupational dynamics. The immigration stories of WPPs will help us to understand both how migrants connect to each other, the sources and kinds of their social capital in Istanbul, and also the reasons for their entering the WPP world. I will present their migration stories as they offered them to me. At the end of this section, I generalize from their migration stories based on what WPPs shared with me about their immigration.

Of all my informants, Kısa was the first to come to Istanbul. Therefore I would like to share his story first and then share other WPPs migration stories, which indicate similarities and differences. Kısa started his story of coming to Istanbul as follows: “My father brought me to Istanbul in 1968. At that time there was a mechanic in Şirinevler and I started working at this shop. Anyway I tried to learn how to fix autos but my boss was so drunk. Whatever he was doing, there was always a bottle of alcohol in his hand. After getting drunk, he was always beating his wife. His wife was treating me very well. Anyway, while I was working there, I lost much weight. He gave me a little money but no breakfast, only lunch. I escaped from hunger then I went to Unkapanı where my relatives were working. They had already been doing this job so they helped me to find this job and taught me the details of the job.”

First, Kısa focused on his reason to immigrate to Istanbul 1968 from Tokat²⁴. Economic insufficiency was the main concern that led him to migrate to Istanbul. Kısa started Waste Picking at the suggestion of relatives. Since his relatives were

²⁴ A province in the Northern part of Turkey.

already doing this job, it was easy for him to start this occupation. Family and friend connections have profound roles in this job. Social capital and connections among migrants are major attributes helping migrants survive where they migrated. As his family and friends do this job, he also does it and so does his son.

Sedat is the second WPP I interviewed. He introduced me to other WPPs as well. Earlier I noted that he had migrated to Istanbul 21 years ago. However, he started as a WPP just four years ago.

Sedat began his conversation: “I started to work when I was thirteen years old in Izmir. I have three sisters and two brothers. I am the eldest. I grew them up on my knees and shoulders [It means, he was eldest in his family so he take care of other members of his family]. They are grown up now and they have their own jobs. So now we are distant to each other. The husband of one of my sisters was a governor in Ankara, but I do not know what they are doing now.”

He continued, “Like I said, I started to work at the age of thirteen. I only graduated from elementary school. My father had no occupation. He was sometimes an informal imam²⁵, especially during Ramadan. When someone died, he read the Koran for the dead person or read mevlid²⁶ sometimes. Oh fuck! I cannot understand how one can afford his family with this kind of job.”

This was the first time he used slang dialect to explain his opinion. He was so angry with his father because he thinks his father was irresponsible for his siblings and family. I saw his anger on his face when he talked about his father. Furthermore, he thinks all negative circumstances in his life even starting this job are because of his father’s irresponsibility.

Like K1sa, Sedat’s main reason for migration was the economic advantages that Istanbul offered him. He expressed his awareness of the pull factors of Istanbul with the following sentence, “I came to Istanbul because if I have to make comparison between Izmir and Istanbul to find a job, I can say that Istanbul is Germany and Izmir is Turkey.” Even though Izmir is third biggest city of Turkey and has lots of advantages in term of finding a job, he decided to migrate to Istanbul. His relation with his family looks problematic, because he doesn’t contact with them. During my

²⁵ A religious man, who leads prayers in the mosque.

²⁶ A Muslim religion book, which is read on special days by the imam.

time hanging around with him, I concluded that both family problems and the attractiveness of Istanbul led him to migrate to Istanbul.

Murat's migration story centered on forced Kurdish displacement. Gören Ceren Deniz focused on Kurdish displacement in his thesis on WPPs, arguing that,

“The displacement of the Kurds has caused a rupture from their traditional economic and cultural activities and left them to the mercy of market conditions in urban areas. Moreover, forced migration has prevented the Kurdish population from education opportunities. The adult men have very low education levels and women are mostly illiterate and could not speak Turkish. They do even not receive any subsidies to settle to their destination of migration. The victims of forced migration make up a cheap labor power in cities and economically, spatially and culturally pushed out of the society” (Deniz 2010: 98).

After migration, many forced Kurdish migrants found themselves in a strange place, and they had little information about living in a big city.

Murat had been a waste paper picker for seven years in Ankara. He is now studying in Kocaeli University and helps with the publishing and distribution of *KATIK* magazine. During our interview, I asked Murat to tell his story and experience in his own words.

Murat began his migration story by saying, “We left our village, *Ördekli*, in 1993. We sold our assets, our livestock at giveaway prices. My grandfather had about 1200-1300 sheep at that time. But he took the sheep to the city of Hakkari²⁷ and sold them at great loss. The price of the livestock came to only a tenth of the market price at that time. This discount happened because all forced migrants brought their livestock to sell in Hakkari. Besides discount sales, we lost our supplies, fodder for the animals, our poultry. In short, we lost all the things necessary for life. Then, we moved from our village to the city of Hakkari, because we have relatives there and they helped us with accommodation.”

Murat continued that, “Some families from our village went to Hakkari, some went to Van but most went to Ankara. Just think; even though these people had not been before in any big cities like Istanbul and Ankara in their life suddenly they find their selves in Ankara. They have just been in Hakkari maybe, Hakkari was little different from villages at that time, and it is still looks like a village.”

²⁷ A province in Eastern Turkey.

These people had not lived in a big city before. Therefore, they had no idea about a city's own internal dynamics. Living in a city is not the same as living in a village, of course. In the cities, everything is set according to the time, like buses, trains, working hours in the workplace. In addition, neighborly relations, kinship relations, living in an apartment, economic living standards have different attitudes when we compare living in cities with life in villages. Nicole and Hugh Pope assessed the situation as follows, "Worst of all, the struggle never looked likely to have a clean ending. In the first decade of fighting, millions of Turkey's Kurds have been displaced into the poorest quarters of big cities" (Pope and Pope 2004: 248). Because of these changes, forced migrants are isolated from city life and become social outcasts. So, in Murat's migration story, we can see that migration was crucial link in their entering this occupation.

Murat continued, "They came to Ankara, and asked themselves, *what are we going to do?* They learned that there is something call *Kağıtçılık* (Waste Paper Picking), they learned that people collect plastic, paper, and other useful materials from trash cans and from the streets and later sell it. They began to work at this job. They were already bankrupt, had no money, and were really poor at that time. They tried to rent houses in Ankara-Türközü, but householders did not rent to them because they are from Hakkari and they are Kurds and especially they are accused of being *Terörist*.²⁸"

Here we can see clearly ethnic discrimination, racism and inequalities in their life. They are not part of the military struggle between Kurdish nationalists and the Turkish state but they are nevertheless suddenly faced with a host of difficulties in the big cities. From this situation, one finds these people facing the problem of housing after the migration or health problems coming from bad conditions of houses or insufficient nutrition, and having no job. Therefore, those people looked at the fastest and easiest solution and so immediately started in this occupation.

"In 1998, I and my brothers decide to come to Ankara to do this job," Murat explains. "Other families in our village had been doing this job for 5 years in Ankara.

²⁸ Being a member of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party, Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan).

We bought *Eşşek*²⁹. I have worked at this job only summer times when I was in school however when I graduated from high school I began to work full-time. Anyway, believe me that this job is, if there is no other alternative to someone, last job a human being will do. Because this job is incredibly dirty. Everything you wear gets a devastating smell, awful all the time.”

Nesih, Baran, Ersin and Ahmet are cousins who came to Istanbul from Şanlıurfa and now work as WPPs. I met them in Kadıköy at two o'clock in the morning while they were loading material they had collected around that neighborhood. Hearing their conversation with each other in Kurdish gave me a chance to introduce myself in my mother tongue. This first interaction seemed to open a place for me and I shared my desire with them that I wanted talk more. Since it was two o'clock in the morning and they were busy loading, I took their cell-phone numbers and we agreed to meet another time.

A week later, after some calls, we meet in Kadıköy with Nesih. He wanted to buy me something to drink, and then he got me to go to a BİM³⁰ supermarket. I asked him kindly to go to a coffee shop, however he refused and said: “I am ashamed to go to coffee shop wearing these clothes.”

Nesih continued his speech, “We all stay in a house in the Maltepe neighborhood. Twelve people stay together—we are all cousins. Except for my uncle, who uses his track to carry wastes from Kadıköy to Maltepe, we all work together. I will go to Siverek³¹ next month, especially in Ramadan time. After spending some time there, will go to the Black Sea area of Turkey in order to work in nut fields. I do that because in Ramadan the job here is not good and it is so hot. That’s why I will go there. After finishing the nut job in the Black Sea area, then I will go to Adana to work in the cotton fields. All my family will join me at that time too.”

Nesih and his cousins are seasonal WPPs who come to Istanbul in different seasons. As Nesih explains, they work as seasonal workers in a particular part of the country at a particular time. As a result of having a large family, they preferred staying in a house together. Ali Mendillioğlu addresses this subject in an interview

²⁹ Originally the Turkish word for donkey but here meaning a hand truck or the vehicle used to carry waste paper picking.

³⁰ BİM is known for its cheap products.

³¹ A small town of Şanlıurfa province.

he gave to *BirGün* newspaper to Meltem Mercan, "...there are seasonal workers, people who come from abroad to do this job as well. There are people who come from Georgia and Turkic Republics and who work seasonally here. There are ones who are coming from East and Southeast. For instance, 300-400 people in Ankara came in order to from Urfa-Siverek and Diyarbakir work seasonally... They do farming labour seasonally in Ankara / Polatlı and when they finish, come and collect paper. Eventually, they go back to their hometown." (05 January 2010).

These migrations stories show patterns of factors that drove people to enter this occupation after migration. In addition to what is written above, I will give more data about reasons of starting this job and its relation with immigration. My data show three main reasons for these immigrants to start this occupation: (1) kinship / relative / friend and compatriot relations, and the social capital present within these network as; (2) the easy entry to this occupation; and, (3) association with the mafia or WPPs being hired on daily basis.

(1) For WPPs, as informal workers, kinship is the first and most often used venue for survival in and adaptation to Istanbul for immigrants. The urging of a relative / friend or compatriot leads them to start this work. In my research, I found this to be the case in many WPP stories. Most WPPs start in this livelihood because they have kin already in this occupation. After immigration, immigrants face an immediate priority in finding a job as soon as possible to maintain life. Yujiro Hayami, A.K. Dikshit and S.N.Mishra, sociologists who studied Waste pickers and collectors in Delhi, emphasize the importance of relatives and friend relations and their effect on beginning this occupation, saying that, "Typically, when a young man comes from a village to Delhi, it is easy to find an established collector through the connection of relatives and friends. ..." (2006:53).

Social scientists emphasize that compatriots and kin are among the fundamental determining factors for immigrants successful adaptation to their place of immigration (Charmes 2000). My respondents report using kin relationships to find work as one of their most frequent tactics for survival for people immigrating to Istanbul. For my respondents, the strength of kin ties in Istanbul is the most essential factor determining where the immigrant will settle, what he will do, whom he will meet, and how he will adapt to the new place.

(2) When we consider the requirements for the WPP occupation, that so many immigrants select this work is easy to understand. What follows identifies the requirements for entering the occupation and the details of waste picking activities, as described by my respondents. The information provided by my informants corresponds to that identified by other researchers, too (Deniz 2010; Beukering 1996; Chikarmane and Narayan 2009).

As Liebow argues, “good references, a good driving record, a tenth grade (or any high school) education, previous experience, the ability to ‘bring police clearance with you’ are not normally required...” for the day laborers found among the street corner men he studied in Washington, DC (2003: 27). These characteristics fit Sedat and his entry into work as a WPP. As Sedat explained, setting oneself up in this occupation requires just having 100 lira for buying a hand-truck, being able-bodied, having minimal familiarity with the area where they will work, some knowledge about which wastes are valuable, and so on. Most young adults in Istanbul fit these kinds of requirements. The occupation presents few impediments to entry.

In a report in *Birgün* newspaper, Ali Mendillioğlu explained how people start this occupation: “Who will give a job to kid or an old man, and illiterate one? However, you just need a decision to start this occupation. You find a linen bag then go to streets. And also, you are your own patron” (Birgün, 05 January 2010). Mendillioğlu draws a general picture of WPPs, which also fits my informants: they are youths, or old people, and often-illiterate people. No big qualifications are needed to start this occupation, as Mendillioğlu explained, what is needed is a linen bag to hold wastes and to start. However, I argue that this characterization fits primarily the daily workers. Poornima Chikarmane and Lakshmi Narayan, coordinators of the Programme for the Empowerment of Women Waste pickers in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education in the SNDT Women's University in Pune, profile the typical Waste Picker in India, Thailand and the Philippines:

- Waste picking possibly ranks lowest in the occupational hierarchy in any country that it is carried out.

- Waste picking is an occupation with low or non-existent entry costs; it is often the first refuge of migrants who find it difficult to get other forms of work.
- The conditions of work are uniformly horrific but the income earned is usually higher than the minimum wage (2009: 15).

As an occupation, WPP shares the main features with other jobs in the informal sector: “ease of entry; small scale of activity; self-employment, with a high proportion of family workers and apprentices; little capital and equipment; labour intensive technologies; low skills...” (Charmes 2000: 3). All these features are distinguishable in this occupation. Little capital need be invested to start, just enough to buy equipment; modest physical strength, only enough to carry wastes from one place to another; minimal previous work experience, just hands-on instruction which can be gained by doing it with someone knowledgeable for 3 or 5 days (Beukering *et al.* 1996: 11); modest knowledge about marketing, only enough to determine which waste is worthy and where it can be sold; informal work style, primarily working independently and avoid problems with the other WPPs, where to bring wastes, who to sell the wastes to, and for how much to sell them for. All these requirements can be seen in work of WPPs.

From my field observations I noted that a hand-truck for transporting wastes as they are gathered (costing about 100 TL), along with a pair of gloves (another 10-12 TL) and a metal hook (which can be obtained from rubbish) to pick wastes without touching are the basic tools needed. The metal hook helps WPPs work fast and pick wastes without getting overly dirty. Dirty clothes and shoes are needed to keep them warm and shod. These are the basic equipment for someone working in this sector. It is easy and straightforward to get this equipment (Beukering *et al.* 1996; Chikarmane and Narayan 2009). Further, the equipment is obtained and the job skills learned through kinship/ compatriot and friendship networks. The newcomer then usually works in the same place and doing the specific kinds of work as do members of his or her network. Gören Ceren Deniz in his thesis finds a similar explanation for how people from Hakkari enter waste-picking work in Ankara/Turkozu (Deniz 2010).

A WPP relative is a major factor leading to easy entry for immigrants choosing

this occupation. Participants in the waste-picker occupation enter this work to maintain their life; as time goes by, they become more experienced, more effective and then the centre of their own network in this sector. WPPs stand in a critical place where the formal and the informal economies meet. They are in between; the waste items they collect in the streets they then sell to Warehouse Owners. Once WPPs sell their wastes to Warehouse owners, the waste enters the formal economy in a legal business. Warehouse owners sell those wastes to big corporations located in the formal economy. Therefore, WPPs are on the edge of two worlds; between legality and illegality, between formal and informal, between recognized and unrecognized, between known and unknown. Being in between also means that they know both situations, therefore, knowing both places led them to make their tricks and tactics, which also mean of survival of immigrants. They use this in between situation for their advantages. These advantages create a space for them to survive. Many researchers both in Turkey and in Europe have reached similar findings. Since the warehouse owner is the entry of WPPs into the formal sector, they have profound effects on decisions about WPPs work and live and occupy a very critical position. The more solid-waste a warehouse owner gets, the more money he earns. More information will be provided about warehouse owner later but here we note the second main route for entering the WPP occupation is having a warehouse owner relative/ friend/ compatriot.

(3) From WPPs' immigration stories and their accounts of reasons for starting this occupation, I argue that the 'mafia' or hiring WPP on daily basis is a third vital route into the occupation. However, this factor is not mentioned in previous researches in Turkey. During 16 months of field and ethnographic work, I identified a group of people from Adana, a group that can be described as an illegal organization operating in Ortaköy and its neighborhood. Under the bridge of Beşiktaş, they called this Ortaköy group 'the mafia.' In other words, some people start this occupation, like their peers, because of economic poverty, which they have to deal with. But hiring daily WPPs is a special case. All the WPPs with whom I talked knew about people being hired to work for a man, who has a white car, in the Ortaköy area.

One night, we were under the bridge again, and the talk turned to what they had done during the day. Ali asked Baba, "Did you go to Ortaköy today?" Baba

answered, “Yes, I went there before nine o’clock.” I was not aware why they asked this question to each other, however, after some while, I learned that WPP work in Ortaköy is only for Adanalılar³². However, some well-established WPPs can work there, but not for a long time. For instance, since Baba and some other WPPs have been doing this job for a long time, nobody wants to have any problem with them.

After learning this detail from people under the bridge, I asked Baba, “Why don’t you tell me this kind of things? Are we still friends or not?” He bashfully looked at me and said, “I thought you know about this hoca! But I don’t want you to go there, because even I don’t go there.” Then, we agreed to talk about it more.

“Even though I have been working in this neighborhood for a long time, as you see me here, everybody knows me. However I don’t go there, because that is their area,” continues Baba. Then I asked him, “Why did you go there this morning then?” He answered, “I go there in the morning, while they are not in the field. However, still it is not problem, everybody can go there and pick the wastes, as I told you before, WPPs mostly make money through having a connection or an anchor with a shopkeeper, a craftsman, and local people. Those Adanalılar don’t let other WPPs to some kind of deal with each other. So, it means that they collect the wastes of Ortaköy.”

In this quotation, Baba explained two very crucial manners for us to understand WPPs inner dynamics however at this section of the thesis I will not focus on these dynamics but rather on the migration issue. I asked Baba and other WPPs about hiring people to work for.

Baba, Biktım and Salih were telling me that, “so many people work for both mafia and also for warehouse owners. They lend some money to these WPPs and give them a shelter to stay in, then these WPPs work for them.”

Some neighborhoods there are only immigrants from one place. Such as Adanalılar in Ortaköy, Sinoplular³³ in Eminönü or in general Niğde’liler in this occupation provide examples that we can conclude about their hiring issue.

These three reasons, (1) kinship / relative / friend and compatriot relations; (2) the easy entry to this occupation; and, (3) mafia or hiring WPP on daily basis, are the main issues that I found important that lead people to entry this occupation. All these

³² WPPs from Adana province.

³³ A province in Northern part of Turkey.

three reasons have connection with immigration. From the immigration stories of some WPPs and also these reasons show us that both why people chose this occupation.

4.4. Entering the World of WPPs

I will explain two types of entering the WPP world: my entering the world of WPPs and the WPPs' entering this occupation. I first saw Sedat sitting under the bridge of Beşiktaş Square on the wastes which he had collected around the Beşiktaş neighborhood. While he was smoking, I approached him and introduced myself as a student at Fatih University, doing my master's degree.

While I was talking with Sedat, Baba appeared. We were standing since there was nothing to sit on at that time. Then Baba took something that could serve as a seat out of the garbage and gave it to me. I sat on this thing and we started to talk face to face. I saw them smoking and thought it would be a good strategy to buy some cigarettes to share with them. By doing this, I thought, I had a chance of having a conversation with them easily. Furthermore, I was thirsty, so I asked them if they wanted to drink something. Both of them nodded their head like, 'No, we are okay!' First of all, they were not willing to talk, but Baba was happy to talk³⁴. At first glance, sharing my cigarettes and showing my ID made them feel relaxed. So they started to talk me without hesitation. Their first sentence, and also key sentence for me about entering the world of WPP, came from both Sedat and Baba: "Nobody will do this job if he is not obliged to!"

Then, I asked what kind of obligation you had in your life?

Sedat said he had been doing his job for four years. However, he said "I am a collector of plastic bottles, beer bottles, beer cans rather than a collector of waste papers because these wastes are more valuable than waste papers. One should keep in mind that this job-collecting beer cans and so on- is only suitable for the summer times. This job is dead in winter times. We are hungry in winter; we earn enough to survive only summer times with this job. In winter this job is dead because no one drinks anything—especially people do not drink beer outside, in the parks or in the

³⁴ I did not understand at first glance, however after having spent a lot of time with Baba, while he is drinking beer, he talks a lot. This was one of those moments.

streets. However, in the summer time there are waste plastics or beer cans everywhere so I think because of the times of the job, this is a seasonal job. I will tell you something else, goddamn it, we cannot do this job in summer since this new government -they are 'hacı / hoca'³⁵. They have the power they do not allow people to drink alcohol in the parks, in the streets and so on. That's why people should drink alcohol at their home or in the bars or nightclubs. This regulation affects our job.”

Before getting to the point of why Sedat started this job, he began showing some anger on his face while talking about regulations that negatively affects his earnings. He identified himself not only as a WPP but also as a collector, because, as he argued, picking paper doesn't make enough money for his expenses. He began to work when he was child, due to economical insufficiencies he faced in his childhood. From this point, he changed direction of speak to his family issues. Then, later, he gave a picture of his starting this job.

He continued, “The first time I began to work in a restaurant, my father was going to take my money from my boss before I got it. On that day, I remember I asked for my money, look at the fucking luck, someone had already taken my pay. Guess who? Of course, my dad! I was working for 13-14 hours a day, but my father was getting my money. That's why I was constantly arguing with my bosses because I was the one who wanted to have my money to myself. Therefore, I could not have a permanent job. My parents did not send me to the school after elementary school, they wanted me to work and bring money home. Again, I cannot understand why my parents had six children? As you know, we were poor people. I was obliged to work but my father was taking my money so this situation made me feel miserable. I was always arguing with my bosses; for that reason I was fired from each job. So I could not be an expert in any occupation. I was getting older so no one wanted to give me a permanent job. What's more I do not want a permanent job.” Car-washers, dishwashers, housekeepers, tea servers or other occupations work regular work. But, regular work hours are not very attractive to paper pickers.

This conversation demonstrates that Sedat has worked for short periods of time in different occupations such as restaurants and traditional tea gardens. He listed some

³⁵ That the current government has a conservative point of view.

reasons for his irregular work history; for example, he thinks the circumstances of his life did not orientate him to have a permanent job, such as having little formal education; beginning to work as a child; having many family members that needed to be fed. In addition to these reasons, his irregular work history ensnared him in a loop where not staying enough time in any job thus did not give him the experience to be qualified in any job.

People offer many reasons for quitting their jobs. However as Liebow explains, marginal workers in the informal economy quit their jobs for similar reasons. Liebow points out that, “Behind the man’s refusal to take a job or his decision to quit one is not a simple impulse...” (2003:23). Liebow point out there is not a simple reason to quit a job and thus not developing expertise in a specific job. In addition how much the job offers is another important reason to quit a job. Furthermore, Sedat knows how many hours one has to work in permanent occupations. Thus, he thinks permanent jobs do not let him to live the way he wants. He feels permanent jobs do not give workers what they deserve. For the point of Sedat’s view, 773 TL³⁶ is not enough money to motivate a person to endure the rigors of low-status, low-skilled formal work. Liebow states that, “... menial jobs in retailing or in the service trades simply do not pay enough to support a man and his family” (2003: 26). Menial jobs such as car-washer or dishwasher do not pay enough money to make them attractive to my respondents. From Sedat’s experiences in these kinds of jobs, he knows very well that the payment will not satisfy him.

I asked him, “Why do not you want any permanent job, do you have any story about that situation?”

Sedat pointed across the street with his finger and asked, “Do you see McDonald's, Kentucky, Pizza Hut and other shops and restaurants over there? Do you know how many hour employees work in a day? I tell you they work at least 13-14 hours a day and the money they earn is not more than 700 liras. However I make more than 1000 lira a month. Can we mention their social life? They have no social life. They are made to work just like a 'donkey'. For sure they do not earn what they deserve. Just like a donkey, they are suffering day by day and they do not even know

³⁶ Net minimum wage in 2013. <http://www.sksorgu.net/asgari-ucret-2013.html>.

it. They have to be at work on time. They have a boss who controls their life. So you tell me now, why would I want a regular/permanent job? Employers do not give me a job, this is another issue, but there is no reason for me to work in a permanent job.”

It shows me that Sedat has a persuasive knowledge about what he is doing. I think he has chosen consciously to work as a WPP. He knows what permanent workers do and how many hours they work in their jobs. He thinks his working field and time is better than other workers. He does not care that he is called dirty or stinky. There are many reasons for him to choose this job, such as having no boss—an absence that makes him feel free. He thinks that working in a permanent job will reintroduce him in a system. It is obvious that he thinks that system takes freedom from his life. Because when I asked him whether he has bank account or telephone, he said, ‘Of course I have my telephone but don’t have enough credit to make calls. Bank account! Why do I need a bank account? I don’t make extra money to put in this system.’ Furthermore, he does not care about social rights in his life, because, I believe he is a healthy person, (at least looked healthy) and if he wants he could find a decent job, which has social rights, especially rights of health and retirement insurance.

I am no longer a stranger to the WPPs. When I go there under the bridge, they try to arrange somewhere for me to sit. We have conversations like, “How is school? You weren’t here yesterday? Wow, you have shaved?” Furthermore, when we talk about a subject, they tell me things like, “teacher you are the most educated among us” and “you know the best, please help us understand this issue”. So they know why I was there and they expected me to say something different on a given subject.

One day I went to bridge but couldn’t find anyone. Baba had given me his phone number³⁷. I called him and he said that he was sitting at the florist. I went there and there was nobody except him, the owner and me. Sometimes the florist left the shop under Baba’s control and would go somewhere else. It shows that Baba not only picks up bottles and paper but also helps other tradesmen near the bridge. After a long time sitting at the florist, we went out. Although he promised twice, I had not had the opportunity to listen to him thoroughly. I asked, “Shall we buy a bottle of

³⁷ He even asked for my phone and used it to discuss something with his mother who lives in İzmir.

wine?” He said, “Stop! You shouldn’t buy because they will sell it to you expensively.” We went to buy together. Because he was one of the shop’s permanent customers, he got the wine cheaper.

He began to talk: “I am unhappy today because I could not pick much. Look how much I have picked (a car half full). Since it is cold today,” he explained, “there is not much to pick. Your Baba looks after everybody here. God dammed, they almost always come and ask for cigarette (he was pointing to the other pickers). OK, it is right that I am the oldest and that’s why they call me “Baba” but what they are doing is too much, oh fuck! I tried to find a job after I was released from jail and I had interviews with a few places but they did not call me back and I even applied at an Employment Agency. Wherever I applied, I was rejected because of my age and previous life in prison. I had to do something for a living and while I was thinking about what to do, I met with these waste paper pickers.”

When he talked about his family, his eyes began to full with tears. “I will do everything for them; I had that imprisonment just because they punched my son! I have 2 sons but no daughter and I have 3 grandchildren.” He took his wallet from his pocket and showed me pictures of his family, his mother, father, sister, sons and especially his two grandchildren. “None of them knows that I do this job, they think that I work in fishery. Our life is just a big lie, oh fuck. Sometimes I buy some fish and I bring them home as if I worked in a fishery. Your yenge cooks.”

“I don’t go home because whenever I go there a quarrel starts. Your yenge doesn’t like my drinking alcohol. She always talks about it much. With this happening all the time, I don’t want to go. And what’s more, my grandchildren are there in the opposite flat so it is not nice. I get on well with my sons. They know that I drink alcohol but don’t know what I do. Sometimes the eldest one puts money into my pocket while the other buys me cigarette and alcohol. They even don’t smoke but eldest one drinks beer from time to time.”

I went under the bridge to see WPPs. Nearby vehicles of political parties were parked again and broadcast messages. We could not hear each other due to these vehicles’ propagandas. I saw Ali and Biktım while they were sitting and drinking wine. They gave me something to sit on. Ali continued like this,

“Hoca,³⁸ the noise of these vehicles fucks our mind!” He continued, “because of their noise we fucked up!” Then, I asked Ali whether he went to the hospital with Baba or not. He said no because he had no money and also his clothes were stinky.

When we were sitting under the bridge a woman came with her Kokoreç bench. She was a 45-50 year-old fat woman. Ali said he had been a Kokorec seller for 3 months in Ortaköy. He continued, “I was starting at 6pm and working until 3am in the morning. I earned 60 liras per night. It was really good money at that time. I was so clean otherwise nobody would want to buy from me. Look at this woman (he pointed to the fat women); she earns nothing because she is dirty. I was not like her, I was clean and respectful to the costumers.”

His conversation demonstrates that he had done different jobs and his comparison of what he did as a Kokoreç seller to the woman shows that he knows the requirements for a job. He claims that hygiene is paramount in the food and beverage sector but on the other side he does not care hygiene at this stage of his life. When he gives his arguments, he expects me to agree on his arguments as a ‘Hoca’. Even from this little dialogue it comes out that I had gained their respect. This helped me while doing my observations by putting a line between them and me. However this line was not that strict. Ali worked in other jobs especially he worked in construction areas.

In the end of our conversation, he added, “I will look for a construction job in the summer time but, first, I have to go to the hospital to take my surgery stitches off.”

I felt like he wanted me to help him. From the beginning he had repeated this stitches problem several times. After the conversations between us, and observations that I had done, it appeared that, his main reason of starting this occupation is his addiction to alcohol. He mentioned several times that due to the alcohol problem he could not find regular job. Even if he were suitable for another job and willing to get a permanent job, he cannot do so because of his problem. He does not have a political standpoint to begin this job like Sedat has nor he has age problem like Baba. As he said, he is a native German speaker and also has a little English knowledge but he does not use the benefits of these languages to find a permanent job. As far as I

³⁸ Some WPPs call me *Hoca*, which means ‘Teacher’.

understood, he is not a lazy or irresponsible person in his life. But the main problem in his life is being addicted to alcohol that affects negatively both his social and work life.

Mesut seems relaxed to me because he has been doing this occupation for 20 years and I think this experience gives him self-confidence. He thinks, like Sedat, that for him the most important reason to start this job is having no boss. He thinks having no boss gives him an opportunity to be free. He said, “My boss is my father”. However his father is not a boss controlling his life but he is just a father. They just care each other in the field and go back to home together.

4.5. Typical Work Day of a WPP

A typical WPP workday will be presented in their own words. In this section, I will focus on issues relating to a typical workday of WPPs: How many hours they work, where they work, and how much money they earn. I will include some memories of my own workday as WPPs. I worked in the field both in summer and wintertime; day and night; weekdays and weekends. I worked one night with Baba in the summer time, I helped Bıktım in daytime, I have recorded Murat’s talking about days of WPPs, and I have separated wastes that are collected. From this point of view, I will also share my experience as a WPP in the field.

Murat explained the routine of a WPP’s day: “We only have a special day in the week. This day was Sunday. It was something like a formality for us. We worked for six days a week. Sunday was our holiday. But there was a difference: on Sunday we would take the useful things that we collected from trash cans, and we tried to sell this things in the *İtfaiye Meydanı*³⁹ second hand bazaar. So it was not real holiday for us. We were working from 4 or 5 pm to 3 or 4 am in a day. Actually, we were trying to check the trashcans before the municipal scavengers got there. Otherwise we had nothing for that day. At the end of the work hour, we should have about 500 or 600 kilograms of waste products. And it means that only 50 or 60 liras for each day.”

Baba tried to give some details about his job: “Actually we don’t earn much from this job, that is, picking waste paper and bottles does not bring profit and you cannot

³⁹ A neighborhood in Ankara.

do anything with this little money, oh fuck! Eventually you sell the kilo of what you have picked for 60 Kuruş. Look, we find many different things in rubbish containers. We find books, shoes, food, bread and sometimes half- full bottles of alcohol. For example I found a book, a very old book, yesterday and I gave it a bookseller to sell it but he did not come back. I will find him and fuck him. Under any circumstance its price can't be under 300 Turkish Liras." He showed me other books and shoes he had collected to sell.

Baba likes dealing with the others there. He looked at Ali and began to talk: "Fucking boy, you have started drinking alcohol even before your stitches haven't been taken out, what should I do with you? At an early hour tomorrow we will go to hospital and take your stitches out. We will go for sure, ok?"

It is obvious that they not only pick wastes but also look after each other in their daily workdays. Even though they may not know each other's lives and stories still they take care of each other. Their friendship is born locally, under the bridge of Beşiktaş. Especially Baba usually has an idea of where Ali is or when he would come back. However some of WPPs do not like each other. Baba told me that, "I do not like him (pointing Sedat), and he looks like a very sneaky one." On the one hand, my informants deal with difficulties together and, on the other hand, money issues can make problem between them. So they talk about each other behind their back.

I asked Baba about his daily routine in this work and how he has found it. He gave a long answer and I did not want to interrupt his long speech. He was drinking wine and it was almost finished. He turned to Ali and asked, "Do you have money? This wine is finishing, we should buy another." Then he turned to me and continued,

"I watched my friend for some time and then one day I also took a plastic bag and began to go from one rubbish container to another. Because it was my first time, I didn't know what to pick and I was picking some odd things. And as time goes by, you learn the details of the job: What is worth picking and what is not and when to go to a business or when to wait. Day by day you learn the how-to of the job and you become expert on the job. For instance, if someone else is working on a rubbish container, you should not get near to him and you should wait until he leaves. You learn how to open the bag properly and not touch dirt. Look, we have a skewer (whose edge is hooked), with this skewer you do not have to lean over much into rubbish container. It is kind of luck whether to find something worthy or not. And

after a while you begin to meet the other pickers. If I work for 4-5 hours, I will make this fill this hand truck. I want to tell you that if somebody works at this job, he will earn much money as long as he doesn't have expenditures like alcohol, cigarettes, and so on. He will earn more than a retired man. Don't look at my situation, I spend all I earn for alcohol and cigarettes but I don't need anyone's help. Your yenge⁴⁰ has a retirement pension, I do not use any of it and she spends it as she wishes. I do not ask money from her and neither does she ask from me."

Salih mentioned once about his day routine, "Look, my friend. If one works hard at this job, he will make three trucks full of wastes. It means around 50-70 liras. Money depends on what we collect. Waste paper and waste plastic, bottles or any other metal makes different amounts of money. For instance, some WPPs working for my warehouse owners have to bring at least three hand trucks full of waste. This is normal."

Generally, WPPs work 10-12 hours a day. They go to field before municipality garbage people go to bins areas. During these hours they collect the wastes as much as they can. However, they do work, but also meet with each other, rest in parks, separate their wastes, carry the waste to warehouses. Basically, the first thing they do is, go to the field, the place they work. For instance, I went to under the bridge in an early hour of a day, I saw Baba was still sleeping there. I woke him up, first thing he said, "Hoca, give me a cigarette!" After he had his cigarette, we went to Balkan Restaurant⁴¹, while we were walking we came across with Ali, he joined us, too. We had soup. I attempted to pay, Baba said, "You only pay yours." and I only paid mine soup. I saw that both of them did not pay any money. I asked Baba why he had not paid, he said, "These people know us here. Since it is only 1.5 TL, we don't pay, and they don't ask for it." After breakfast, we went back to the under the bridge, after he had his tea, then he decided to go to field. It was around 10 am. I went to library for study.

The way Baba start to job is different than other WPPs. I have explained why he has started that late, and rest that much in typology part on the chapter. However, from my observation, I can say, WPPs work not only during daytime but also at nighttime, too. They are expected to collect three hand trucks full of wastes. The

⁴⁰ Yenge, a Turkish word, means uncle's wife.

⁴¹ A cheap restaurant in Beşiktaş neighborhood.

weight of these depends on items they collected. However, it is usually around 80-90 kilos. When they work nights, they are exposed to additional considerable risks such as cold weather, catching a disease from the garbage, dealing with drunken people, etc. Resul Çelik, a sixty-four year old waste paper picker in Ankara, told the *Roja Ciwan Agency*, “When we picked the wastes from trash cans, we catch diseases, bacteria. But the money, which I earn, is just enough for live, that’s why I cannot go to hospital. Although my wife is sick, I cannot to take my wife to the hospital” (Mazlum, 2009).

“We have no social security. If you get disease, you are own your own. And of course, you could have any disease from garbage. Because we work at night so the weather is so cold. So, we easily get sick” said Murat. Having no health insurance or no experience of health services makes every thing worse in their life.

At this point I would like to share my experience as a WPP in the field. This is important and useful, because being in the field and trying to understand their world needs to been within inside. I asked Baba whether I could help him in the field to collect wastes. First, he thought that I am stupid, and told me, “Look at this gentleman! He wants to work with me as a WPP. Fuck your head! Do you study for being WPP, don’t you?” My request surprised him. However, he seemed happy when I told him so. We agreed to meet around 8 pm one night in the summer time. We purposely chose to work at night because in daytime the weather was very hot. Before meeting him, I dressed up in my old-style clothes. Since it was summer, I did not need anything warm. I chose my dress intentionally— from my observation I knew that my blue jeans would look weird for working someone in the field. I met him under the bridge, once we met; Baba laughed at me and said, “There we have a new chicken marked!” We laughed a while then we got two big sacks and walked up to Serencebey Yokuşu Street⁴².

In the first garbage area, I ran to open the bin covers, however Baba stopped me and said, “Calm down, first you better check around the bins and then you are expected to open the covers.” Since we had only two big sacks, we should not collect something heavy since we would not be able to carry it. I followed his instructions

⁴² I drew a hand-made map of our route that night; see Appendix A.

and opened the cover of the bins slowly; I found some plastic water bottles, plastic caps for cleaning products, and some magazines. I got excited about what we had collected. Then we walked across the hill to bins in other areas. We turned left and he made a deal with me, “Look hoca, there are two areas that we should check, you will check the one far away.” I agreed and he directed me to third place and I went there.

While I was walking to third place, he called after me, “Hoca, be careful with cats!” He was right because cats are one of main problems related with this occupation. Cats could make some serious scar on a WPPs’ hand or face. Cats go into the bins and when a WPP checks inside the bins, the cats create problems for WPPs. So, after having been warned by Baba about cats, I understood why he said, “Calm down!”

While walking to the fourth bin area, I asked, “What will we do if we see another WPP collecting from the same bins?” He answered, “No problem! You should wait until he finishes his job there. After he leaves, you can go to same bin, too.” However, I did not understand at first. Baba understood that I was confused and continued, “It is kind of attitude that you should have it in this occupation. This is a rule that you learn during time in the field.” Baba’s attitude in the field was completely different than under the bridge. Under the bridge, sometimes he does nothing but sit there for hours. However, in the field, he works so hard. I asked about why we go same bins where someone else just collected wastes. Baba said, “We don’t know what he collected; maybe, he collects just plastics, metals, or any other things. Everyone could collect different items from same bins. That’s why we go and check the same bins.”

Once the other WPP left, we went to the same place and tried to find some items that we could pick. There were some black plastic bags. I tried to open them while wearing gloves but it took some time before I was successful. Baba said, “This is the reason so many WPPs don’t use this gloves,” and continued, “Don’t try to open these plastic bags, I will do that. You are spending a lot of time. We should hurry before the municipal street cleaner comes.” He used a hook to open the plastic bags easily. When we got to the eighth area, my bag was half full with wastes and it was becoming heavier in each stop. Since it was nighttime, we did not see many people

on the street, however when we got to Çırağan Caddesi, there were many people.

Before going on that busy street, I was thinking that I would feel ashamed; however, I was not. Maybe Baba being with me while we were walking there, maybe I knew enough information about WPPs, or maybe I had spent lot of time with WPPs—whatever the reason, I felt comfortable working alongside Baba. The more waste we collected, the heavier our bags became. On that street, people were walking by without seeing us. In a word, they completely ignored our being there. However some woman on the sidewalk crossed to the opposite site. When we got under the bridge, it was already around 10:30 pm, but we had two sacks each half-full. Bıktım and Ali were there and laughed at me because I was tired and it was so obvious when I almost fell down on the couch under the bridge of Beşiktaş. This was my first night as a WPP.

What I learnt from that experience is primarily the rigors of the work condition of WPPs; when to go to the field to collect wastes, how to collect the wastes, the unwritten rules of WPPs to each other, how to deal with the eyes of members of the public when one works, how heavy the work is, and how much waste one can collect in 2-3 hours. This was not the end of the process— dividing the wastes and carrying them to the warehouse to sell them remains. We were tired and also the warehouse was closed already, therefore, Baba decided not to do anything else that night.

Another time, I helped Baba and Bıktım separate the wastes into parts; plastics go in one bag, paper goes in one bag, metal goes in another one. After we separated the wastes, we carried two hand-trucks full of wastes from under the bridge to the Karaköy warehouse.

This separating process and carrying the wastes to warehouse reveals another context important for understanding WPP tactics. During these tasks, I learned more WPP tricks; for instance, while we were separating wastes, especially waste papers are not put in a bag but laid a top each other. It is because; carrying them in this way is easier. After stacking a pile of waste papers, the whole pile is doused with water to make it heavier. A nearby tap for watering grasses in the park provides the water to make the paper heavier. So, the heavier the paper, the t more money we received for the paper collected. However, it should be just enough water, otherwise it will be so obvious enough to make a problem with the warehouse owners, and no one in this

occupation wants any problems with warehouse owner, the buyers of the wastes collected.

We finalized the process of separating and loading the sorted wastes onto two hand-trucks. Baba, Bıktım, and I were ready to carry the wastes from Beşiktaş to the Karaköy warehouse. I asked to drive a hand-truck, however Baba and Bıktım laughed at me and offered me another way to do it. Baba said, “Are you going to drive this! How will you do that? We don’t want to have any minor accident and make people angry with us. If you drive this car in this crowd then you will be ready to start this occupation soon.” Bıktım continues, “I will drive in this crowd but when we get around Fındıklı Park, you will get it, all right?” This made sense because I could have an accident. Maneuvering a hand-truck in a crowded area requires training. We agreed and hit the road.

After taking off from crowded area, and getting close to Fındıklı Park, I took the hand-truck loaded with plastic bags and some metal items. Baba went in front of me. The moment I got the hand-truck, the first thing he said, “Hoca, give your weight on your forepart, otherwise, you will not be able to drive it.” After driving the hand-truck about 500 metres, I noticed it seeming to become heavier and I called Bıktım to give me a hand. He however he was busy with his beer and smoking, while he was walking beside me. Bıktım said, “It is not so easy, is it? It is getting heavier with each step.” It was true that after some while the hand-truck got heavier and I could not drive it like I first had been able to. Baba had passed me and was waiting me in front of a gas station. Once I got there Baba was smiling and said, “You think that you are younger than me, but you are not. Look, I passed you. I tell you what, you should start to drive this hand-truck slowly, and use your energy carefully, and otherwise you cannot do that.” He was correct that I should have used my energy better. Bıktım continues, “Come on, come on. We have only two more streets to go, then we will have money.”

Once we got there, we found around ten other WPPs; some were resting, some were waiting to sell their goods, some were chatting, and some were dealing with the warehouse owner. Baba asked the warehouse owner, “How long we will wait? If it will take long, let us to have a tea in the corner.” The Warehouse owner said, “Come on, Baba! When did you start to drink tea instead of beer?” Baba answered, “Once

you give me my money, I will not drink tea anymore.” and both laughed a while. And, yes, it was true. Once we got all money, a total of 34,75 TL, we first went to eat a chicken wrap, then to Fındıklı Park to rest. We went to Fındıklı Park with our hand-trucks. I was driving easily because it was empty. We met some of Baba friends in the par and Bıktım went to buy cigarettes and beers.

We can divide the WPPs’ daily routing into four steps: 1) Collecting wastes from particular places; 2) separating those wastes into different types; 3) carrying them to a warehouse; then, 4) getting cash money.

At this stage, some interesting memories of a WPP workday will illustrate what they see about their job from their point of view. This provides another perspective, the WPPs’ point of view of their workday.

I asked Murat to tell me a memory of a workday. He laughed and said, “There are lot of memories, every time something happens in this occupation. When I worked I was so nervous. It has hard to explain to you now; my psychology was so different then now. When I saw people’s eyes on me, I felt like an animal. I remember one time when I searched in the trashcans then grabbed a piece of shit, then I got crazy. That’s why I was so nervous, you work in the middle of the night at the same time other people are sitting in their living room in their warm houses. And you see and hear their happiness. How one cannot be nervous. I hated all humanity. It is not my choice to be a Kurd; it was not my choice to be a *Kağıtçı*. That’s why I was nervous. I felt like I am living another world. Let me tell you something, one day I was in *Küçükkesat*, a neighborhood in Ankara. My burden was so heavy, I can say about 80 or 90 kilos, I was trying to climb a ramp. I was sweating profusely it is because of my burden, it was summer time. I decided to have a break after I reached the taxi stand. I took a cigarette, but believe me this cigarette was more valuable then anything else. During the break a women crossed over to my side of the street. Suddenly I heard a scream from this women but this scream was like if you see a ghost or it was like a wild animal was attacking you and you scream because of this animal.”

Many members of the public when they see WPPs in the field, react negatively to their job and their physical appearance, make WPPs feel as an ‘other’. The feelings of being a social outcast, social inequality, and discrimination are things WPPs have

to deal with on a daily routine.

Sedat shared his experiences and how people reacted to him in the field. “People’s attitude depends person by person. I know some people act like an angel to us and also some people act like we are animals. For example, while I was gathering waste beer bottles on the Balat sea front, a man called me and told me that I could take all his empty bottles. I told myself ‘you are lucky tonight.’ However, when I tried to take the bottles, suddenly one of them shouted at me; “What the fuck are you doing? Are you taking tributes from us? Leave all bottles here and never come back here!” I told him I had already gotten permission from his friend. He did not even listen to me. Actually I know why he did not listen me. He characterizes me as a homeless, weak, lower class, and so on. Thus these images in his mind give him right to treat me without respect. They can yell at us, they can blaspheme us or they can accuse us of theft. These all happen because we are waste pickers. We cannot go to the police because of such unjustifiable circumstances. We know the police will arrest us for sure. According to the police we have already eaten the s....t! Look, I tell you something, if we argue because of you-let’s suppose you try to sell me heroin and I said no, then we argue and you slapped me in my face- we go police. I am sure that police will not believe me because you are a master student and I am no one. This circumstance is same everywhere. You have money, you are right any time! I do not believe the police, politicians, people and so on. I am on my own.”

When we look at people in marginal social and economic sectors, especially waste paper pickers, I note that migrants often do not integrate in formal ways with the cities where they move, but instead find and develop informal ways to survive. After their migration, they are faced with problems of survival in big cities. Loss and poverty came as the first problems, with immigrants coming to big cities without a kuruş. As a result, they started looking for bread to live on. Soon they begin to work on the streets as a waste paper picker or in other informal occupations. Yeşim Mutlu, a sociology graduate student at Middle Eastern Technical University, wrote in her master's thesis that, “... the marginal sector is still the largest one among the internally displaced persons, particularly for men. To clarify, what is meant by the phrase working in the marginal sector in this study is working in building and/or as a peddler, selling fruits, vegetables and stuffed mussels in a pushcart, thus earning

money within the informal economy” (Mutlu 2009: 93). Mutlu might well have included waste paper pickers in her list of marginal occupations.

Is forced migration created new urban have-nots in the cities of Western Turkey. These have-nots find informal ways to solve their problems. The problem of accommodation has often been solved through illegal ways. For instance, some of these forced migrants have solved their accommodation problems with building *Gecekondu*⁴³ in slum areas of the cities of western Turkey. “New urban people are hard-pressed to establish formal relationships within the cities so they use informal ways to live. Because of these informal relationships within the cities, they become lonely so they close their doors. And they become more even more dependent on informal relations of solidarity” (Erder, 1999:111).

4.5. Typologies and Interaction of WPPs in the field

I argue that rather than there being only one type of WPP, they can better be understood as falling into five different kinds of WPPs. Members of Each type differ in work, the way they work, the money they earn, and their relations with local people. Among my informants, some WPPs can be seen to fit into more than one type while others fall only into one. These types are: (1) Old-hand WPPs, (2) Beginner WPPs, (3) Drunk WPPs, (4) Hired WPPs, and (5) Seasonal WPPs. Below, each type is described and compared.

1) Old-Hand WPPs: During my participant observation, I witnessed WPPs go about their daily routine. Every two weeks, usually on Mondays, I would call Baba and met him. On Monday, I called Baba, but there was no answer. Someone answered his phone and said, “The Police packed Baba.” “What is ‘packed’?” I asked. “It means that, ‘police caught him and he is in prison now’,” said the man on telephone.

At that moment, I thought about what Baba might have done. I looked for a reason. But all the reasons I thought of was not helping anything but making me anxious. Then, I thought that I should go under the bridge of Beşiktaş, or the warehouse in Karaköy, or the park in Fındıklı to find someone we both knew and ask whether that

⁴³ Illegally constructed houses in slum areas by poor and by migrants in Istanbul and western cities of Turkey.

person knew anything about Baba's situation. I walked down the Taksim slope to the Beşiktaş bridge; I looked for a familiar face in Karaköy. There were times when I could not contact any WPPs and this was one of these moments. So, before going to the place where Baba rests and has his social relations, I decided to visit to the warehouse and ask about Baba in Karaköy. I tried to find the warehouse. I asked the shop owners nearby, as they all know where it is, and it became easy for me to find it. In the warehouse, there were large sums of solid-waste waiting to be sold. I went inside and introduced myself and asked about Baba.

The warehouse owner answered, "Perhaps Baba may have involved in a fight, we heard that there were wounded people. The Police arrived there and brought him. What happened, why he fought, whom he wounded, is not known. But he sent me his mobile phone and SIM via cargo. Don't worry; he will be released in a few days. What will the state do with people like Baba? They are damage for state."

The most intriguing part of this conversation for me was that Baba had sent only his mobile phone. He did not let his friends know why he was with the police but sent his mobile phone to the warehouse owner. Sending only the mobile phone is a question mark, and sending it to the warehouse owner is another important question mark. Answers to these question marks led me to uncover the functions of mobile phone for the Old-hand type of WPP.

One can argue that everyone has a mobile phone nowadays; there is no special connection between owning a mobile phone and WPPs' inner dynamics. However, I argue that, for Old-hand WPPs, the mobile phone plays a crucial role. I inferred that the most important reason Baba sent his mobile phone to the Warehouse Owner is that, even in prison, he did not want to lose connection with people who give their solid-wastes to him in the Beşiktaş neighborhood. Old-Hand WPPs' earning strategies differ from those of incipient WPPs. Old-hand WPPs earning does not depend on picking waste from rubbish, bins, and streets as it is generally thought, but instead depends on relationship they have established over time.

I have seen Old-hand WPPs, such as Baba and Salih: they rest and wait for nothing and drink lots of alcohol. They were not in the field like other WPPs. They sometimes collect wastes from the bins area but most of the times hang around.

Once, while we were chatting, Baba said that he knew many people and he

showed me his mobile phone contact lists. Baba said proudly, “You will be surprised if you learn what kind of people I know. Many rich men, accountants, bankers, shop owners, apartment owners, market owners, stationers, restaurant owners, etc.” He had approximately 500 contact names in his mobile phone. Baba continues, “We got most of the wastes from offices and companies. No matter the hour, they call us. We go and pick them to sell.”

Salih gave an example, “Last night I was drinking here, it was around 11, at night. I was kind a tired but one of my friends called and said, ‘Come here there is work for you.’ I went there. He and his wife had thrown some goods outside their home, on the street. He called me so that these goods would not be seen as rubbish or be taken by someone else. I gathered them and there were about 4 hand truckloads. So I have enough, am not working today. Resting time for me.” He had a gleeful on his face.

These two informants have been WPPs for more then ten years, but the way they earn money and the way they work are different from other types of WPPs. They have developed a useful network and which plays a vital role in their earnings. This relationship is invisible to naked eye, but becomes visible through interviews, participant observation and ethnographic work. Old-hand WPPs have to get on well with people— developing warm and intimate relations has great importance for Old-hand WPPs.

The significance of the mobile phone in this occupation is related to the job itself. Typically, most WPPs do not spend all their time in the same place, they always move from one place to another. They do not stay on in one place for more than five minutes if they are not resting or chatting with each other. In a way, since it is a mobile job, their obligation to move requires them to use a mobile phone. However, it is hard to say same thing for Old-hand WPPs.

I did not have the chance/opportunity to see Baba and the others during the winter. It was too cold to go out and pick wastes at nights. I thought it unethical to ask them to spend time with me instead of working. But I continued connections with them through the mobile phone. On the coldest days of winter, some WPPs and homeless people stayed in places provided by police and municipalities. During that time, I received a few calls with Baba.

Baba did not stay in a shelter for long; he only stayed there during the coldest

days. I asked him, “Why don’t you stay in shelter? If you want, can you stay there or not?” He replied, “Yes, I can but I don’t stay due to few reasons. First, all the insane people are there. Fuck it off man. For example, they may pee on you. What a foolish man! So, you expect me stay among these insane people (maniacs). I am safer here on the streets. Second, it is too far to my work place. The shelter is in Levent and I work here in this area. Third, my friends are here; here is my district.” While we were talking about these reasons, Bıktım was nodding.

I see from this paragraph a devotion to a specific place and Baba is unwilling to stay away from this place. He has set up a social network for himself in Beşiktaş, Karaköy, and Fındıklı. Building this network did not happen in a short time; it took years of working and mutually knowing each other. For instance, Baba and Simitçi helped each other and in the same way, his relation with shop owners is really intimate. This mutual benefit relation is important for Baba, for other WPPs and for the tradesmen in the neighbourhood. ‘Here is my district’, I argue that this sentence just can be heard only from Old-hand WPPs, because it depends on their relation that they own during years time.

Ali’s words will help us evaluate the situation more, “Once there were Bally addicts (smell of glue) under the bridge. After we came here, we drove them away. For example, they were over there a few days ago, they had in hand bally (glue) and they were disturbing passers-by. I was angered, and then approached them, ‘Fuck off, from my sight.’ They did not take me seriously at first, but after I shouted angrily, they walked away immediately. I told them not come here again.” As regards to local neighbourhood, WPPs being in the place and their belonging exists due to their mutual interests. WPP in the Besiktas neighborhood, including tradesmen, calling Baba “Baba” is because of his relation with neighborhood and his being there. Thus, Old-Hand WPPs do not want to change their location, because it would not only end up in network loss but also in money loss, too.

Gaining money depends on phone calls coming from local people, companies, market owners, and restaurants. By these calls people ask them to pick wastes at a specific time. These wastes may include paper, copper, old refrigerators, household objects, plastics, etc. Thus, to guard against this source of earnings, Baba consciously sent his mobile phone to the warehouse owner. His mobile phone is crucial to

maintain social relations he has set in year's time. An unanswered call not only means lose of money but also may ruin his relations. So, even when he is not available, he wants his job to be done. And as result, mobile phone has a principal role in their inner-dynamics and communication.

2) Beginner WPPs: Collecting wastes directly from the streets is mostly done by Beginner WPPs. Except for Old-hand WPPs, all types of WPPs collect wastes from streets. However, Beginner WPPs are mostly young people, often very young people. For these people survival and earnings depend on experience and relationships with others, especially with more experienced WPPs.

The following stories of Beginner WPPs highlight the reason to categorize them with this name. Beginner WPPs are mostly kids, such as Küçük, Mert, Selim, Rezzan, and Erdinç. Further, four of these respondents are Gypsies, and are all under 18 years old, except for Selim, who is 20.

As Omer and Mert said, "We wake up at 7 am to go to school and come back home at 12 pm. Then we have to help to our family to divide the wastes. We come here at 7 pm until 2 am in the morning". Obviously, these children are aware of their family situation and they talk with 'have to' sentences.

I wanted to talk with a woman WPP, but could not get in touch with one easily. So, I asked for help from one of my female friends. I had seen some woman WPPs around Beşiktaş Çarşı. I went there with my friend in an early morning; there were some young and female WPPs in front of Starbucks. I thought I could make an interview with both the kids and female WPPs. I introduced myself and asked kindly whether they would talk with me. Since it was early morning, I invited one of them, whose name is Selim to have a tea with us. He joined us and had a tea. I asked whether he had had breakfast or not. He shook his head, saying no. I went to a patisserie and bought some pastries. Once we settled down and were ready for a conversation, Erdinç and Eyüp came forward and asked to join us. I think, they had been watching us from the corner. Once we had tea and pastries, they wanted to join us. Suddenly, we become five at a table. However, my mind was busy with how to invite their female friend who was sitting nearby on the sidewalk and watching us. After a while, I asked Selim, "Why don't you invite your friend," pointing to the female WPP. He called her and she, Rezzan, came. However, she was quiet and

talked little.

During our conversation, Selim talked the most. Other WPPs was busy eating and drinking. We talked about why they started this job. Selim said, “We are Roma (Gypsy). My family does this, so I do.” The other WPPs, including Rezzan, nodded their heads. Selim explained he the eldest in that group. He was 20 years old, while Erdiñç was 14, Eyüp 12, and Rezzan 16 years old.

Selim continued, “We are not staying here all the time. For instance we were in Bakırköy⁴⁴ last year, but this year we come here. Do you remember, there was an explosion in Bakırköy last year, the explosion of propane cylinder in a home, at that time I was collecting wastes just on that street. I was scared a lot. I have not feared that much in my life.” This explosion was something special for him. He continued, “Police forces were looking for me, because they had asked to some other WPPs and they went to the warehouse and showed my picture to the owner. They had my picture. They got my picture from street cameras of some other shops. Anyway, I was afraid a lot and went to the police center. They captured me immediately and asked me hundreds questions. After they figure out that this was not a bomb but explosion of a propane cylinder, they let me go.” I did not want to interrupt his speech about that explosion, because he looked eager to talk about this issue. However, from this conversation I see that this group of WPPs work in different neighborhoods of Istanbul, they were mostly young people, and they are kin to each other.

I asked him about their relationship with local artisans; he said, “Abi⁴⁵, I will go to the army in two months and I have some debt that I should pay before I go, that’s why I came here. And also these are my kin. My brother and I work together, he went to Yıldız Yokuşu. He will come back soon.” He did not give an answer about their relationship with local artisans, so I asked in another way that, “Do you know any local shopkeeper here?” He answered, “No, I don’t know anyone here. We came here a week ago. In the summer time, we stay outside. For instance, we came here from Esenyurt for one week. We collect wastes for a week then we carry them from here to there.”

⁴⁴ A municipality of Istanbul.

⁴⁵ To show his respect, he used *Abi*, a Turkish word, meaning ‘Big Brother’.

From this point of view, I asked him to describe how they carry these goods from Beşiktaş to Esenyurt, which are around 70 km apart. He answered happily, “Abi, our warehouse owner has a big truck, he comes and take us and all the wastes from here to there.” I then asked about where they stayed at night, and if they face any problems. He answered, “Abi, we have no problem most of the time. But I want to tell you something. One night we were sitting around the fire in the Yıldız Yokuşu park area. A car came, a fancy car, someone got out and began to urinate just in front of us. There were some female kin with us too. I went and told him, ‘Why do you piss here, in front of us. Why don’t you go just to the corner, do what ever you want.’ Once I told him that he just slapped my face. It suddenly became a fight. He called the police and they came, the police did not ask anything to me or to him. They just handcuffed me, and put me into the police car. They drove me to nowhere and then they left me there. I don’t know what time it was. Those police slapped me and beat me, too.”

Even though Selim started this occupation four years ago, he can still be called a beginner WPP. When we compare Old Hand and Beginner WPPs, the first area where they differ is their relation with local people, police forces, and local warehouse owners. First, Beginner WPPs have a little connection with local people and shopkeepers, as Selim explained. Second, they do not stay in one place long enough to get to know other WPPs and local people. For instance, Baba comfortably could say, “Here is my district,” but these Beginner WPPs do not have the same kind of connection to a locale. Third the way they make money also differentiates Old-Hand and Beginner WPPs, instead of hanging around waiting to be called to pick up some trash, mostly work in the field. Fourth, even though Beginner WPPs work in several different neighborhoods, they nevertheless sell their goods to the same warehouse owner. Beginner WPPs depend more than do Old Hands on experience and relationships with others for survival and earning money.

3) Drunk WPPs: Baba, Salih, Bıktım, and some other WPPs have a habit: sitting by the Bosphorus, drinking alcoholic beverages, and discussing the politics of Turkey. Fındıklı Park is their preferred gathering place, where they get together, rest, sleep in summers, and get news from each other.

Drunk WPPs drink alcohol whenever they find free time. I have hung around with

those Drunk WPPs a lot. While hanging around, I was not aware of the importance of their being almost always drunk. After spending more time with them, I remembered thinking, “These are drunks, that’s all! There is nothing for me to understand.” With this attitude, I began to hand out with them less than I had before. However, again, as usual, one of Baba’s conversations made me think more deeply about WPPs.

I was trying to understand the warehouse owners’ role in and impact on this occupation. Baba explained to me and said, “I don’t work with all warehouse owners. Actually it is hard to work with them, too. For instance, how can I work with the warehouse in Tarlabası? Tarlabası is in nowhere... And also, for instance, even though it is close I don’t give my wastes to the warehouse in Boğazkesen Yokuşu⁴⁶ either. It has different reasons. I give my wastes to the Karaköy warehouse. Because, there, the price of waste have changes little for me. Maybe it is not big differentiation between prices, however once you count it kilo by kilo, you figure out that the weight is high so this small amount of money becomes a big number.” Baba continues describing Boğazkesen Yokuşu warehouse owner’s attitude, pointing out that, “Buv, this man is Hacı/Hoca, doesn’t receive goods from me. I went there a couple of times, but I smelled of beer. He warned me not to come over there again.” Even though the price of wastes in the Boğazkesen Yokuşu warehouse is better than those at the Karaköy warehouse, these Drunk WPPs do not sell wastes to the Boğazkesen Yokuşu warehouse. This knowledge helped me understand that there are different kinds of WPPs and one of them is Drunk WPPs. The money they make, the way they live in the street, and people’s attitude for them is different from other WPPs. Baba’s statement shows as well that the WPPs recognize these differences in the inner-dynamics of WPPs world, it makes different. The money they earn and the way they work is different than other kinds of WPPs typologies.

From Baba’s explanation, we see that Drunk WPPs earn less money than do other kinds of WPPs. I do not argue that it is one of the main characteristics of Drunk WPPs circumstance, however I see that they earn less money.

The way Drunk WPPs spend their money differs from that of other types of WPPs. For example, Sinan— a 34 year old, bald, short, and stinky WPP under the

⁴⁶ A district in Beyoğlu neighborhood.

bridge, was so drunk that could not walk straight one night, and Baba pointed to him and said, “Look at this stupid head, hoca. I don’t know how he drinks that alcohol. He has no balance once he drinks. Ok, we drink this shit too, but the way he drinks is just too much.” Baba was criticizing Sinan for drinking excessive alcohol. However, while he was telling this he had a beer on his hand.

Baba continues, “Hoca, I don’t tell anyone not to drink alcohol, this is not my business. But what I say is, if you drink this shit you should eat too. Otherwise it will let you down so fast. Look at me, I look younger than him, because I eat.” Baba’s main concern focused on the Drunk WPPs’ daily situation. He wanted other Drunk WPPs to quit their drinking. I think that since he was both a Drunk and an Old-Hand WPPs, he was trying not to have any problem with local people and the police. Therefore, he was trying to get the over-indulgers to quit. Drinking alcohol was something accepted by Baba; however, if one loses self-control after drinking alcohol, Baba gets angry with the person.

One day I saw Bıktım and Baba discussing and almost fighting with each other. I did not want to say something, because I thought their talking the situation out themselves would be better. After much hurling of insults and cursing at each other, Bıktım left. Baba came and sat on his chair under the bridge and asked me for a cigarette. I gave him one and then he asked if I had some change. He wanted to buy a beer. I gave him 2 liras then he bought his beer. While smoking and musing, he started, “Enough with this Drunk stupid,” Pointing at Bıktım and continued. “Last night he was drunk again, we all were drunk too. But after this stupid has enough beer he begins to annoy people who pass under the bridge, asking them for some change. I told him thousands of times. Don’t do that, especially when I am here.” But he doesn’t listen me. Anyway, a friend came and told me that a woman was very scared of this situation last night. That’s what we were discussing.” Baba was angry with Bıktım. Baba does not want to have a bad reputation, since he is an Old-Hand WPP, and he takes care of his relations with local people. Baba pointed that ‘we were all drunk, too.’ That is, all his friends drink alcohol under the bridge of Beşiktaş.

I talked to a shopkeeper and asked him about WPPs. I wanted to know about their relationship with local shops. He said, “If you want to know more about them, you should come here after 8 or 9 pm. They all get drunk, sing, and talk about

everything.” Once they get drunk they speak more and give me more information about their inner-dynamics. On previous pages, I shared some of their stories about themselves, their families, and their interactions local people. In all the stories, drinking beer or wine is featured.

At this point, let me focus on Drunk WPPs’ family relations. The way they spend their earned money differs from the spending of other kinds of WPPs. In my fieldwork experience, I noted that after selling the goods, the first thing Bıktım and Baba did was to buy beer and go to Fındıklı Park. This was kind a habit for Drunk WPPs in that neighborhood. Baba, Bıktım, Salih, Sinan, and Ali have either no relation or a little with their family, in previous I had give their stories. Rather, these Drunk WPPs spend the money they earn for buying alcohol; the main concern for them is not earning money for survival but for drinking alcohol; they have either no or little contact with their family members; their relations with warehouse owners in the field is different than other kinds of WPPs.

4) Hired WPPs: At this stage, I would like to clarify the situations of Hired WPPs and their relationships to warehouse owners.

I visited the warehouse at Karaköy several times. During my visits, I tried to communicate with the warehouse owner, but the warehouse owner had a heavy workload and was not willing to speak to me, and so my visits were superficial. On my first visit, the warehouse owner was using the entrance and the second floor of a demolished building. Nearby in the street was an area where WPPs parked their hand-trucks and rested. Some WPPs were always hanging around in this area, with their hand-trucks sitting nearby and people loading or unloading their goods at the warehouse. A cloth stretched overhead shielded workers from the rain and snow. Some WPPs were sitting and socializing under the cloth.

In addition to the traffic in wastes at the warehouses, these are also places where WPPs socialize. An articles in *Aksiyon Magazine* describes the situation:

“Waste Pickers bring waste paper and similar materials that they collect to warehouses in different places in Ankara. Those warehouses are mostly located at shanty houses' gardens or empty areas. For waste pickers, those areas are also centre to socialize, to chat, or to strengthen their solidarity. In Hamamönü at a similar warehouse, there is even a library, which is created by books pulled out from the

garbage. Those books are on behalf of persons who want to read them or to sell to second-hand booksellers when they get cumulated. Among them there are books in a range from Boris Pasternak to George Sand, from romance books to encyclopedias.” (Karabat 2007)

On my second visit, the warehouse owner told me that he had had to close the second floor due to a disagreement about the rental price. While we were speaking, four people were building a double-decker structure near the place on the first floor where they classify wastes. I asked the Warehouse Owner why they were doing that double-decker and he replied me, “What could it be? I build a double-decker for WPPs to sleep on. They get cold while they sleep on ground, and it is cold already. I can't make an effort to take care of illnesses.”

From an external perspective, it appears that the warehouse owner takes care of the WPPs and protects them against the cold. However, this would be very naive interpretation since the warehouse owner's real character manifests itself in this situation. “Warehouse owners use some WPPs to work for them as wage workers,” said Bıktım, Baba, Kirli and Salih each told me. In other words, WPPs, who work for a wage (around 20-25 TL per day) including lodging and meals, collect solid-waste to give to their warehouses. These are both seasonal (as we could define them), and hired WPPs.

From this situation rises the idea that *some WPPs are not their own bosses*. Consequently, in the Karaköy warehouse owner's situation, he wants to guarantee these WPPs working for him so he provides them lodging and meals. The double-decker meets two needs: by providing WPPs a place to sleep it also guarantees the WO a steady workforce. Moreover, each day a WPP gets sick as a result of sleeping on the ground and does not work causes the warehouse owner to lose money. The interview held in Ankara with WPPs reported in *Aksiyon Magazine* helps clarify the situation, “There are some WPP who stays at warehouses, too. In most cases there are shakedowns laid on the ground at some warehouses.” Similarly a Turkish journalist living in Canada had this conversation with a WPP in Kadıköy.

“How much do you earn from this occupation?” he answered, “I make 30-40, sometimes 20 liras.” She continued with another question, “Is it daily?” The answer was, “Yes. Sometimes 10-15 TL though. When the municipality confiscates our

hand-truck, the warehouse owner cuts 90 TL from us.” From this point she asked another question, “All right, how does this happen? Does the warehouse owner give you the hand-truck?” He answered, “Yes, you take the hand-truck and set out. We collect from Suadiye, Kadiköy, Caddebostan, and Bostanci.” Her final question was, “Then you give whatever you've collected to warehouse owner and he gives you money, is that right? I mean do you get your money daily?” The answer is, “Yes, sometimes weekly.” (Ataogul 2010)

The warehouse owner in Karaköy is not alone in using this tactic; others use this method, too. Warehouse owners are able to steer workers in their sector by developing new tactics. The social network that they have built as a consequence of their different connections provides them this opportunity.

Yujiro Hayami, A.K. Dikshit and S.N.Mishra (2006), sociologists who studied WPPs in India, give a similar example of Delhi's WPPs. They explain that new immigrants mostly work as apprentices and stay at junk stores in the beginning. This apprentice-mastery relationship and staying at junk store situation act as a “contract” between the waste gatherers and the middlemen. Hayami et al. refer to this situation as follows: “According to this contract, the dealer lends a rickshaw cart free of charge and gives cash ... to the collector. The dealer also advances emergency- relief credits in the event of the collector's sickness or accident. For these benefits the collector is obliged to sell all his collections to the dealer at about 5 percent lower prices than those prevailing in the market” (2006:53). WPPs in Delhi and their relationship with their warehouse owners differ from those in Istanbul in the context of community mechanisms. The most significant difference is that a WPP in Delhi is under the care of his/her warehouse owner in case of health problems or accidental situations. Further, WPPs in Istanbul need to supply the equipment that they need themselves. In Turkey, the WPP does have a contract with the warehouse owner.

I do not claim that all warehouses operate WPPs in the same way as hired workers or cooperate with capital owners in order to exploit labor. In her master's thesis, Gören Ceren Deniz (2010) discusses warehouses and suggests that there are different kinds of warehouses. All warehouses do not operate their WPPs in the same way. For example, some warehouses deal with their WPPs seasonally.

5) Seasonal WPPs: Nesih and his siblings illustrate the seasonal WPP situation.

As Nesih explains, he and his siblings work as seasonal workers in different parts of the country at different times. With their large family, they prefer staying in a house together rather than staying at a warehouse. However, those who begin this occupation individually, instead of in a group, often prefer immediately beginning work under the control of a warehouse. Ali Mendillioglu addresses this subject in the interview that he gave to *BirGün* Newspaper, "...there are seasonal workers, people who come from abroad to do this job as well. There are people who come from Georgia and Turkic Republics and who work seasonally here. There are ones who are coming from East and Southeast. For instance, 300-400 people in Ankara came from Urfa-Siverek and Diyarbakir to work seasonally... They do seasonal farm labor in Ankara-Polatli and when they finish there, they come here and collect paper. Eventually, they go back to their hometown" (Mercan 2010).

4.6. Silencing and Hiding of the WPP Occupation

I asked: "Don't you meet your family, do you still have contact with them or not?"

Sedat said: "We sometimes meet but they do not know what I am doing. They think I am working in a '*kıraathane*' [traditional tea gardens in Turkey]. I do not want to ask them for a favor and I have no trouble with anyone. However, I had problems with my father."

Robert Park examines some occupational groups created by city life, and said that, "among the types which it would be interesting to study are: the shop girl, the policeman, the peddler, the cabmen, the night watch man, ... all of these are characteristic products of the conditions of city life" (Park 1925: 14). In addition to this list of occupations, in Istanbul, we can add WPPs, since they are also products of the conditions of city life. Most WPPs are migrants in Istanbul who come and live in Istanbul for different reasons. On arrival, they face various problems of living: finding a job, locating accommodation, and completing education, and especially dealing with the newness of city life. Their livelihood depends on the success of their tactics. As Michel De Certeau, a scholar of urban life, explained, "They remained other within the system which they assimilated and which assimilated them externally. They diverted it without leaving it" (1988: 32). Although migrants are not satisfied with the strategies of system, they create an area within which they survive.

This is Waste Paper Picking in different neighborhoods and not telling this to their relatives. So this tactic opens an opportunity to survival in urban scene. They deal with the problems of daily life, as Anna Secor (2004) described in her study, “There is an Istanbul That Belongs to Me: Citizenship, Space, and Identity in the City” that ‘tactical silence’, ‘hiding their identity’, and ‘anonymity’ are some tactical examples of migrants in the cities too. Secor examined these tactical examples to explain how these migrants groups, especially minority migrants, use these tactics to build or to make it possible to live their identities.

I met Bıktım under the bridge of Beşiktaş and started to talk about what happened to Ali; nobody had seen him for a long time. Later, Bıktım started to talk about his family, “I have a son, who is 22 years old. He lives with his mom. I don’t see them anymore. I never meet my wife but sometimes visit my own family. They think that I work in a traditional Turkish coffee house.”

Until that time, I did not know about his family and that he is divorced. In the passage of Bıktım above, he notes some of WPP tactics, such as hiding and concealing their occupation from some family members. These tactics were noted not only by Salih and Baba, but also by Bıktım and Ahmet, who told similar stories about tactics that they employ to conceal their work from family members.

Especially Drunk WPPs don’t want their job to be known. Baba and Salih always tell this situation. It is kind of a secret for them should be hidden. People who start to this occupation personally due to economical insufficiencies see this occupation as a passageway to other jobs. However, over time, they found advantages of and easiness in the job, so they continue. A temporary tactic became a long-term occupation.

“My son will be a doctor, in fact he is a doctor because he is a fifth year student in medicine at Uludag University. I call him almost everyday. He is my dear son. Even when he has a slight headache, I visit him. I am retired so the money I get is not enough for me but I have to meet my son’s school expenditures. He will be a doctor so he should not have problems about money. The people he has relations are different. Whenever he needs some, I send him money. For example, he wants a computer like yours, which is about 2000 TL and I am going to buy it. My son will be a doctor and if he realizes that I work in this sector, he will be ashamed/

disappointed. That's why, I don't tell him about it. My brother and others know but don't tell my son," said Salih during our conversation about his son.

Salih's son will be a doctor, so this situation makes Salih very proud of his son. The son's occupation may provide his son high social status and may also provide higher status for Salih, too. The social status of a doctor and of a WPP is light-years apart. Bearing this mind, his trying to hide his job is quite understandable. Actually for both his own and his son's sense of self and social honor, Salih does this job without telling his son about waste picking—but this creates a contradiction. His basic worry is caused by his fear of what might happen if his son learns his father's situation. Salih's conception of father-ship is of someone who meets the needs, material and spiritual, of his son. It is a threat for him that this image of himself can be damaged. So, he stakes the situation as follows, "I don't whether he will be ashamed of me, but I will be ashamed for him."

Baba's relationship with his family and his way of hiding his job is similar to Salih's. His family doesn't know that he works in this job and that he sleeps in the streets. Baba once declared, "On the previous day I was at edge of being caught by my wife, oh fuck, I immediately gave the plastic bag in my hands to Gökhan (one of his friends). If my eldest son hears that I am picking bottles and paper from rubbish, then a real problem will arise."

The relationships of WPPs with their families differ by such circumstances. Baba does not want to tell his family that he picks waste from the streets. He fears their reaction to his job and his sleeping under the bridge of Beşiktaş. Thus, he consciously prefers to hide his job from his family members. Baba and Salih hide the job that they earn money from their families, as a tactic, and this creates an area for them to live however they want.

Three factors led Salih to work in this job. First, it was difficult for someone his age to find a formal job, second, the money his son needs for university is earned in this job. Although Salih earlier worked as a formal worker in a tomato sauce factory, he states that the monthly salary there was not enough either for his needs or for his son's education. Third, low retirement salaries in Turkey do not sufficiently cover living costs providing another reason for starting this job.

4.8. Conclusion of Chapter

In this chapter, I have focuses on analyzing of the notes that I had noted during the fieldwork. I have shared the notes of WPPs important events and issues that they think is significant for them.

The demographic background of WPPs has been presented; I interviewed 22 WPPs and two Warehouse Owners (WO): of my 24 respondents, 22 are male and two are female; both Warehouse Owners were male. The mean age of my informants is about 34 years old. WPPs educational attainments, where interview conducted, migration status, ethnic identities have been shared, too. And then, the data that I conducted from gatekeepers have been presented.

The importance and effects of immigration on this occupation has been focused. I saw that all my informants are migrants, who came to Istanbul from variety places in Turkey. My informants had different reasons; economical insufficiencies, forced displacement, pull factors of Istanbul and push factors of place of origin. From WPPs' stories about their immigration and its reasons, I figure out some patterns of factors that drove people to begin this occupation; 1) kinship / relative / friend and compatriot relations, 2) the easy entry to this occupation, and 3) association with the mafia or WPPs being hired on daily basis.

Two types of entering the WPPs world have been explained: my entering the world of WPPs and the WPPs entering this occupation. Some of my informants started with; "Nobody will do this job if he is not obliged to!" However after some time hang out with WPPs, I saw: 1) Regular work hours are not very attractive to WPPs; 2) How much the job offers is a reason to quit a regular job and entering the WPPs; 3) Regular jobs do not let them to live the way they want; 4) Net minimum wage do not motivate a person; 5) Working field and working hours is better than regular jobs; 6) WPPs have no boss; and 7) Age of some WPPs. These are what I heart from WPPs about reasons of starting and staying in this occupation.

A typical workday of WPPs has been presented in from both sides; from my view in the field as a WPP and from their side. Generally, WPPs work 10-12 hours a day. They are expected to collect three hand trucks full of wastes. The weight of these depends on items they collected. However, it is usually around 80-90 kilos. When they work nights, they are exposed to additional considerable risks such as cold

weather, catching a disease from the garbage, dealing with drunken people, etc. I learnt from that experience is primarily the rigors of the work condition of WPPs; when to go to the field to collect wastes, how to collect the wastes, the unwritten rules of WPPs to each other, how to deal with the eyes of members of the public when one works, how heavy the work is, and how much waste one can collect in 2-3 hours.

Typologies and Interaction of WPPs have been presented. I argued that rather than only one type of WPP, they can better be understood as falling into five different kinds of WPPs. Members of Each type differ in work, the way they work, the money they earn, and their relations with local people. Among my informants, some WPPs can be seen to fit into more than one type while others fall only into one. These types are: (1) Old-hand WPPs, (2) Beginner WPPs, (3) Drunk WPPs, (4) Hired WPPs, and (5) Seasonal WPPs. The silencing and hiding of the WPP occupation has been explained through my informants' stories.

This chapter has showed four main things that is heart of the thesis; 1) A general picture of WPPs' age, education level, migrant status, and ethnic identities; 2) Factors of drove people to begin this occupation; 3) Why people stay in this occupation; 4) Daily routine of WPPs from their and my side; and most importantly 5) Types and typologies of WPPs in Istanbul.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This thesis explored the intersection of issues of migration, ethnicity, stratification, and the informal economy. The thesis focused on Waste Paper Pickers (WPPs) as an informal occupational group in Istanbul. I conducted a yearlong fieldwork project among WPPs in Istanbul, collecting ethnographic, observational, participant observational and interview data to develop a description of the everyday life of WPPs and how they organize their daily work routines. This thesis identified most WPPs as immigrants enmeshed in family, friend and compatriot relationships and examined WPP occupational inner-dynamics. This thesis examined on internal, legal migrants, some voluntary and some involuntary, and on these migrants' experiences in the informal economy.

The thesis first reviewed the role of WPPs and scholarly studies of WPPs in areas inside and outside Turkey. The survey of the research shows that waste management system is not sufficient to meet the needs in developing countries so informal systems of waste management grow. Waste collection is ordinarily a municipal responsibility but municipalities are often ineffective in waste collection and waste recycling in developing countries. The most important impact of WPPs occupation is producing significant benefits in recycling wastes, converting inoperative waste into valuable resources, contributing on to the economy as well as cleaning cities worldwide. A review of the literature on waste pickers in other countries shows that most third world countries face rapid urbanization, which is so similar to Istanbul, with fast population growth and migration, and the strategies for dealing with the effects of these problems differ in different countries.

The cost of waste management system is quite high for municipalities. Administrative, financial and technical costs lead to ineffective municipal systems but simultaneously create niches for informal solutions. In the Turkey, municipal waste management systems operate below desired levels, too. The literature shows that the number of waste pickers is increasing day by day, not only in big cities of Turkey, but also in many undeveloped and developing countries. Developed countries have abundance of capital and high labour cost to use for waste

management while developing countries have a spare/scarcity of capital and unskilled labour.

Waste pickers occupy an informal occupation. My main question was, “What is informality? Why we call this occupation as a informal one?” I saw that almost 40 years ago the International Labour Organization (ILO) first used the term “informal sector”. Street vendors in Mexico City; push-cart vendors in New York city; rickshaw pullers in Calcutta; jeepney drives in Manila; garbage collectors in Bogota, and roadside barbers in Durban are labelled informal occupations by the ILO these occupations also share being peopled by disadvantage groups with minimal or absent social rights, social protection, health insurance, and social security. Their income is not stable like WPPs in Istanbul. Social rights and legislations do not cover them.

Worldwide, researchers show that people who work in the informal economy consist largely of migrants. Therefore, the question of migration and its effect on WPPs was another issue that needed to be explained. There is a strong relationship between migrants and informal economy especially among WPPs. Almost all scholar of informal work note the impact of migration on WPP and other informal workers. Migrants are a major disadvantages group suffering from poverty and lack of decent work in the cities.

While there are many studies about waste paper pickers all over the world, there are few such studies in Turkey. Rather than academic studies, most information about WPPs in Turkey has been triggered by news, Internet, and broadcast channels. WPPs life situations, jobs and stories have been the focus of media interest in Turkey.

I used participant observation and participant interview techniques to gather data on WPPs’ occupational strategies, inner-dynamics, everyday life, immigration stories, and reasons for joining this occupation, and relationships with other actors.

Gathering data about the world of WPPs through structured questions or survey techniques is less useful than data generated by interviews and participant observation. Because the inner dynamics and tricks of this occupation lie outside the purview of a statistical analysis— however without that kind of information, it is hard to say anything important about their occupation, daily life, reasons for starting to this occupation, or the impact of migration on this occupation and its inhabitants.

My research strategy included participating as much as possible in the daily routines of WPPs, observing their interaction among each other, and interviewing WPPs in different places and times in their field of action.

I used social network channels to reach people interested in WPPs' current situation. For instance, I became a Facebook friend with Ali Mendillioğlu, chairman of the Recyclers Workers Association, editor of *KATIK*, and a columnist for *Dipnot Tablet*, in order to access those people interested in WPPs. After that, I used a snowball sample technique to identify other WPPs who might be willing to serve as respondents for my research.

From the beginning, I tried to build reliable conversations with the WPPs. They knew I was a student who just wanted to listen to their stories. During the course of my fieldwork, our conversations improved, and they started to see me not as a stranger but as a friend. My method gave me an opportunity to participate in the world of these Istanbul WPPs. I tried to see and understand their perceptions and perspectives from their side, not from the outside. These methods allowed me to paint deeper and richer portraits than those shown in popular media.

This is an exploratory qualitative work; it does not test hypotheses nor generalize beyond my sample of informants. However, triangulation among several research techniques (interview, observation, and field work with participant) permits me to identify and categorize important characteristics of this sample of Istanbul WPPs.

Waste Paper Picking is a 'tactic' employed by immigrants, forced immigrants, lower-class people, unskilled people, or drunk people in Istanbul. Among my informants one can find an example for each of these categories.

Waste Paper Picking is also an occupation chosen by some who find the remuneration of a formal job insufficient compared to informal jobs. In general, WPPs find places within the system in which live to a suitable place for to survive. However, as De Certeau explains, "They remained other within the system." (1988: 32) In my research, WPPs portrayed themselves as largely external to society, but one to which 'they assimilated and which assimilated them externally'. They are migrants, unskilled, children, alcoholics, women and so on. At the same time, they are fathers, brothers, friends, sisters or sons. It is important to see them not only as Waste Paper Pickers but also to see their relationships with others in their own

environment. For passersby who see only the surface of WPPs, they are only dirty, stinky, unskilled, illiterate, criminals or petty thieves. WPPs know that people see them not as people but as something else. “Without leaving the place where he has no choice but live ... he establishes within it a degree of plurality and creativity,” De Certeau notes in his book (1988, p. 30) and, I think, this is exactly what WPPs do under the bridge of Beşiktaş, in Karaköy, in Fındıklı.

I have spent hours with them –in face-to-face relationships, eating together, drinking together and laughing together. I chose to move as much as possible into the world of these male paper pickers because, as Certeau further points out, a statistical investigation of WPPs would be ‘virtually ignorant’ of the trajectories of WPP’s tactics. “Statistical investigation determines ... the elements used, but not the ‘phrasing’ produced by the *bricolage* and the discursiveness ...” (1988: 7) One could say that most WPPs truly are stinky and dirty; however, these summary descriptions are insufficient to understand them. The inner dynamics and tricks of this occupation lie outside the purview of a statistical analysis. A statistical summary of WPPs leave aside such important features of their lives as, their occupation, daily life, reasons for starting the occupation, or the impact of migration on this occupation and its inhabitants.

To understand WPPs in Istanbul, one must show the links between the occupation and immigration. All my informants were migrants to Istanbul. They left their homes and came to the city for different reasons, including economical insufficiencies in their places of origin, forced displacement for socio-political reasons, pull factors of Istanbul and push factors of emigrant place. But each of my informants shares how the immigration experience has a vital impact for understanding their occupational dynamics. WPP immigration stories help us to understand both how migrants connect to each other –mostly through family, citizenship, ethnic background, social links the sources of their social capital in Istanbul—and thus their reasons for entering the WPP world.

WPP migrations stories reveal patterns that drove people to enter this occupation after migration. My data show three main factors that account for these immigrants entering this occupation: (1) kinship / relative / friend and compatriot relations, (the social capital that those people have); (2) the easy entry to this occupation; and, (3)

the mafia or hiring WPP on daily basis.

After immigration, immigrants face an immediate priority of finding a job as soon as possible to maintain life. Most WPPs start in this livelihood because they have kin already in this occupation. My respondents reported using kin relationships to find work as one of their most frequent tactics. The easy entry to this occupation induces immigrants to start this job too: Little capital need be invested to start, just enough to buy equipment; modest physical strength is required, only enough to carry wastes from one place to another; minimal previous work experience is needed, just hands-on instruction which can be gained by doing it with someone knowledgeable for 3 or 5 days; only modest knowledge about marketing is sufficient, only enough to determine which waste is worthy and where it can be sold; an informal work style makes the work attractive, primarily working independently and avoid problems with the other WPPs, where to bring wastes, who to sell the wastes to, and for how much to sell them for. All these requirements can be seen in work of WPPs. And lastly, mafia or hiring WPP on daily basis, are the main issues that I found important that lead people to entry this occupation. All these reasons are connected to immigration.

WPPs entering this occupation offer different accounts of the attraction of the occupation. For Sedat, how little a regular job in the formal sector offers is an important reason for him to start this job in the informal sector. He compares WPP to other low-paid regular jobs. Sedat thinks permanent jobs both restrict his freedom and autonomy and do not give workers what they deserve. From Sedat's viewpoint, 773 TL is not enough money to motivate a person to endure the rigors of formal low-status, low-skilled work.

I gathered accounts of typical WPP workdays in their own words. These accounts provide data to answer several questions about the typical workday of WPPs: How many hours they work, where they work, and how much money they earn. I used my own experience participating as a WPP in the field to add flesh to their accounts. Their stories show that, generally, many WPPs work 10-12 hours a day. Some work not only during the daytime but also at nighttime, too. They are expected to collect three hand trucks full of wastes each day. The weight of these gatherings varies with the items collected but is typically between 80 and 90 kilograms. When working nights, WPPs are further exposed to considerable risks such as cold weather,

catching a disease from the garbage, and dealing with drunken people.

Rather than only one type of WPP, they can better be understood as falling into five different types. WPPs in each type differ in their work, the way they work, the money they earn, and their relations with local people. Among my informants, some WPPs can be seen to fit into more than one type while others fall only into one. These types are: (1) Old-hand WPPs, (2) Beginner WPPs, (3) Drunk WPPs, (4) Hired WPPs, and (5) Seasonal WPPs.

For Old-Hand WPPs, I argue that the mobile phone plays a crucial role. Old-Hand WPPs' earning strategies differ from those of incipient or other WPPs. Old-hand WPPs do not depend on picking waste from rubbish bins and the streets, as it is generally thought; rather they depend on relationships they have established over time. Old-hand WPPs mostly, rest and wait for a call from one of their connections to collect a large amount of waste. Some Old Hand WPPs also drink lots of alcohol and may also fall into another type, the Drunk WPP. Old Hand WPPs were not in the field like other WPPs. While they sometimes collect wastes from bins, most of the times they hang around. They have developed a useful network, which plays a vital role in their earnings. 'Here is my district' is a characteristic sentence said by an Old-Hand WPP. Gaining money depends on phone calls coming from local people, companies, market owners, and restaurants. These calls ask them to pick up wastes at a specific time. The Mobile phone is crucial in maintaining these social relations over time. An unanswered call not only means losing money but also may be the ruin of a relationship.

Beginner WPPs collect wastes from the streets. Except for Old-hand WPPs, all WPPs collect wastes from streets. However, Beginner WPPs are mostly young people, often very young people. Old Hand and Beginner WPPs differ in their relation with local people, police forces, and local warehouse owners. Beginner WPPs have a little connection with local people and shopkeepers. Further, they do not stay in a particular place long enough to get to know other WPPs and local people. They differ as well in how they make money. Instead of hanging around, Beginner WPPs mostly work in the streets. In addition, even if Beginner WPPs work in several different neighborhoods, the same warehouse owner buys their wastes.

Among my informants, Drunk WPPs are characterized by spending most of their

time sitting by the Bosphorus and drinking alcoholic beverages. Fındıklı Park is their preferred gathering place, where they get together, rest, sleep in the summers, and get news from each other. Drunk WPPs drink alcohol whenever they find free time. From Baba's stories, we see that Drunk WPPs earn less money than do other kinds of WPPs. Drunk WPPs have either little or no relation with their families. Drunk WPPs spend the money they earn for buying alcohol; their main concern is not earning money for survival but earning money to support their drinking alcohol; their relations with other actors in the field is different than other kinds of WPPs. For instance, the money they make, the way they live in the street, and people's attitude for them is different from other WPPs [in what ways?]. From Baba's explanation, we see that Drunk WPPs earn less money than do other WPPs.

Hired WPPs *are characterized by not being their own bosses*. Hired WPPs are hired by warehouse owners as waged workers. Hired WPPs collect solid-waste to give to their warehouse for a wage (around 20-25 TL per day) plus lodging and meals.

Seasonal WPPs work as seasonal workers in different kinds of work in different parts of the country at different times. My Seasonal WPP informants prefer staying in a house together rather than at a warehouse. However, those who begin this occupation individually instead of in a group often prefer immediately beginning work under the control of a warehouse.

The Silencing and hiding of the WPPs occupation occurs most acutely among Drunk WPPs who don't want their job to be known. Baba and Salih always tell how their work is a kind of a secret that should be hidden. Both WPPs and the general public see the occupation as stigmatizing. WPPs who start this occupation due to economical insufficiencies see the work as a passageway to other jobs. However, over time, they find advantages to and easiness in the job, so they continue. A temporary tactic becomes a long-term occupation.

Rezzan and Ayse are the only women I interviewed. Rezzan was a bit shy. However with the help of one of my female friends, Rezzan agreed to talk with me. She explained why she began this occupation: "I began this job because being outside is better than being inside." So work, as a paper picker is a tactic to go out for woman as well. In addition to these reasons, having no boss is another important reason for people to enter the world of WPPs.

Rezzan added, “I also began this job because my family does it, too.” Paper picking, as a family job is a familiar situation. However it is rare to see women working alone as paper pickers. The two women I interviewed work together or with their family. I have not shown this in my analyzes part, however, being in the field and observe them for a long time makes me think that for woman WPPs streets are not very safe. But women work at home to divide the waste in the category such as plastic or paper.

Erdinc, Eyup, Omer, and Mert are under the age of 18. Legally they are still children. They do this job because their family does. They cannot have their own hand-trucks because they cannot run them. However they help their fathers, brothers, or cousins pick wastes. They work as helpers to their families and at the same time they go to school.

In summary, the reasons of beginning to this occupation are many. For Sedat the reason of beginning to this job is better than a permanent one. Sedat thinks that permanent jobs do not give one what he deserves. And also, being out of the system is the most important reason for him.

Baba believes he is getting older and older. That’s why, he thinks, nobody gives him a permanent job. He hates quarrels and arguing with his wife at home. He chooses to be outside and to drink alcohol with his friends. He spends all the money he earns from this occupation. His biggest problem is drinking alcohol and this is the reason of his quarrels with his wife.

I observed that Ali is an alcoholic, as well. Thus, drinking alcohol does not let him to work in a permanent job. He sometimes wants to work in a permanent job and sometimes says, “I am happy like that because nobody bothers me”. As far as I understood, he began this occupation because of being addicted to alcohol. This occupation gives him opportunity to drink a lot alcohol during work time.

As I tried to show above, paper pickers’ work is mobile, individual, autonomous, and with flexible working hours. While each person may state a reason to begin this occupation, some common themes emerge from my interviews and observations. First, entering this occupation is easy and this is the most important reason for all paper pickers of beginning. Second, for most WPPs, no boss controls them. This is the second most important reason. Third, for children, they enter the occupation at

the urging or insistence of their families.

In the future, I plan to observe and talk with more paper pickers. I could not find forced migrants for this research but with the help of the people I came to know while doing this study, I plan to locate forced migrants, to observe them, to learn why they began this occupation, and to compare forced migrants and voluntary migrants to see if there are differences between the tactics of voluntary and involuntary migrants' for survival in Istanbul. In addition, research on gender differences in this occupation will be beneficial better to understand the role of woman in this occupation and in the informal economy.

We see a strong relationship between migration and the informal economy. Almost all the writers note the impact of migration on informal occupations. Migrants are a major disadvantaged group who suffer from poverty and lack of decent employment opportunities in cities. However, informal work offers no social security, health insurance, sick days, vacations or other social rights recognised by authorities, unlike workers engaged in formal work. Thus this work may meet survival needs but it does not provide long-term solutions to their needs nor for occupational mobility

In the future, I wish to study the daily routines of migrants who work in the informal economy in Istanbul and in a city of Western Europe, such as Cologne, to understand the inter-dynamics of migrant populations and their adaptive and survival tactics. Although we find that migrants differ both in their origins and in the reasons for their migration, voluntary migrants differ from involuntary migrants; documented migrants differ from undocumented migrants; internal migrants differ from international migrants. My master's thesis focused on internal, legal migrants, some voluntary and some involuntary. The thesis focused on these migrants' experience in the informal economy, but as part of that project it did not fully explore the migration experience itself. Thus, exploring how the different migrant origins and reasons for migration impact on informal employment opportunities and experiences is called for. How the survival strategies of forced Kurdish migrants differ from those of voluntary Kurdish and Turkish is therefore an important question.

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APPENDIX

A.

